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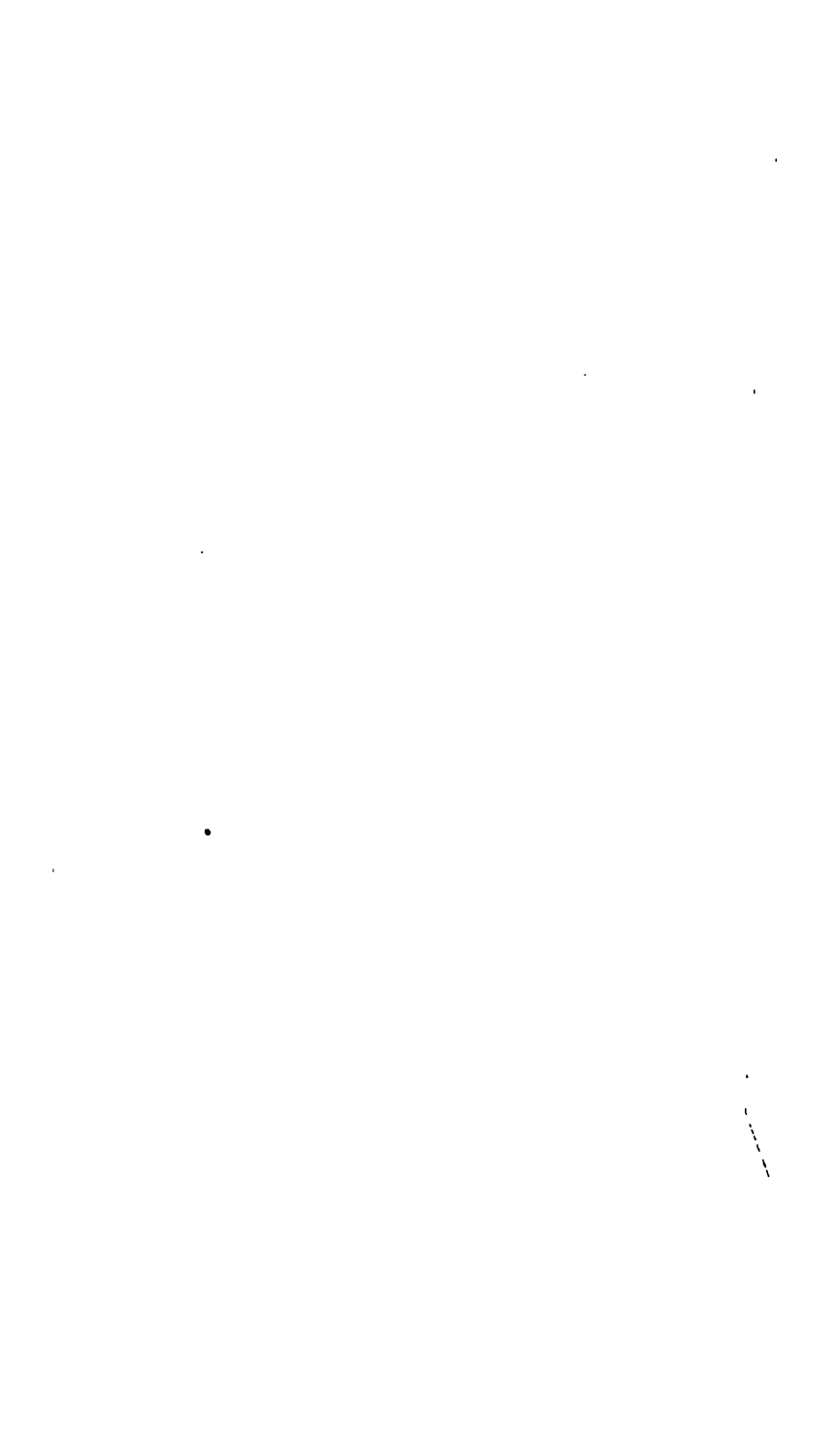
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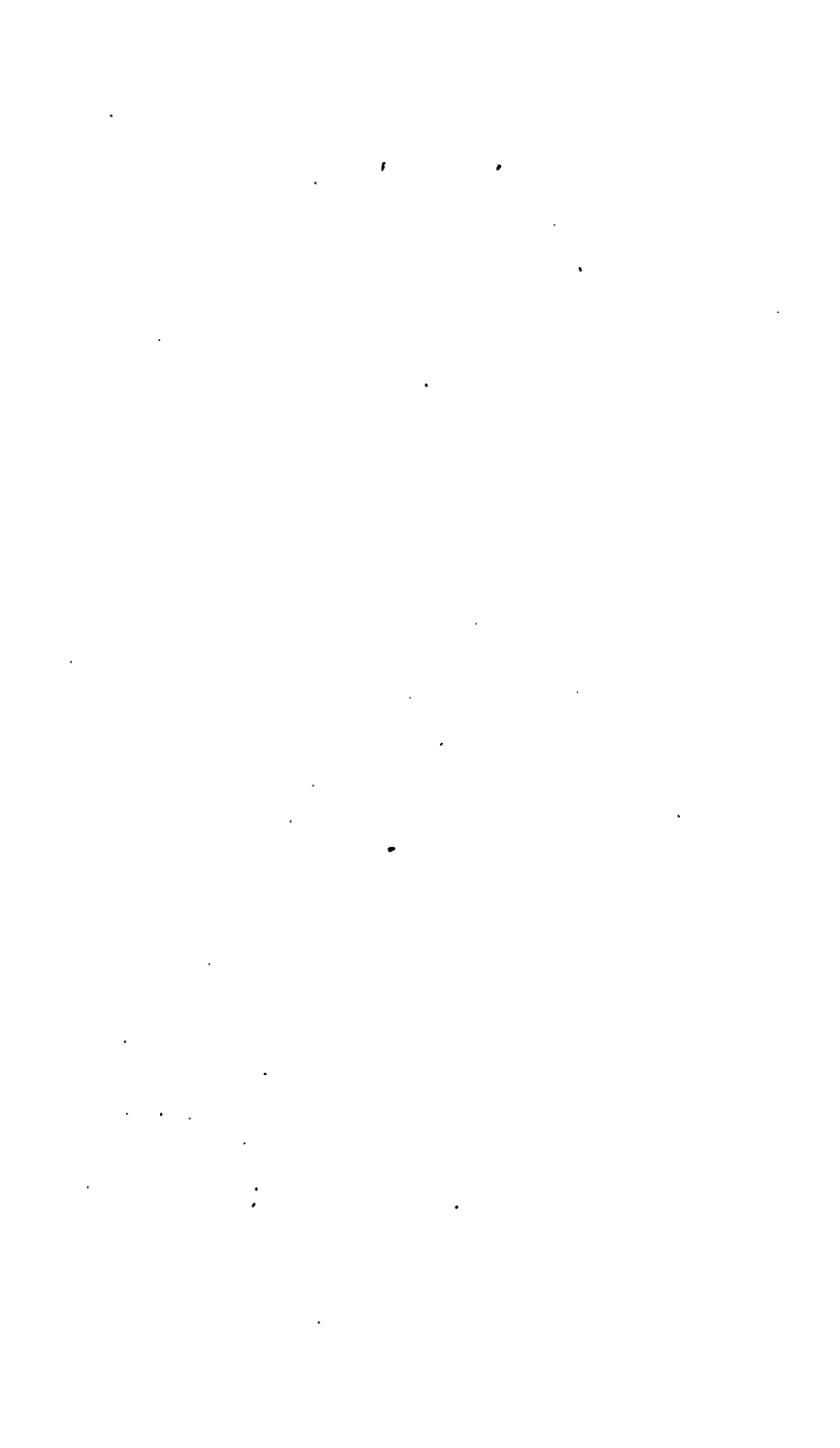






STORY OF A WANDERER.

STORY OF A WANDERER.



THE
S.H. 1827.
STORY OF A WANDERER;

FOUNDED UPON HIS
RECOLLECTIONS

OF INCIDENTS

IN

RUSSIAN AND COSSACK SCENES.

" Sit modus lasso maris, et viarum,
Militiæque."

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR CHARLES KNIGHT,
PALE MALL EAST.

1826.

274.





RECOLLECTIONS OF A WANDERER.

CHAPTER I.

THERE are few men who, at some period of their lives, do not feel a greater interest in the recollection of former events than in the incidents of the passing hour; whilst almost every one who has strayed beyond the boundary of his native village, persuades himself that in his rambles he has learnt or seen something worth remembering—something which, were it recorded, might at least serve to beguile the weariness of a lonely moment, even should it not answer the better purpose of instruction. If this is a folly, it is one in which, I confess, I largely indulge; but such a folly has ever been held venial in an old man, especially one like me, whose chance it has been during the wanderings of early life to mix in scenes and inci-

dents almost bearing the impression of romance. Taking then the old man's privilege, without further preface, I will for a while look back on former days and endeavour to retrace some of these events—events in which I once took the liveliest interest.

Led by a restless disposition to traverse distant regions almost without an object, I happened, many years ago, to be in one of the southern provinces of Russia at a time when a battalion of infantry, quartered in a neighbouring district, received orders to proceed to Tefflis. The colonel of the battalion was my intimate friend; and I, an idle man, yielded to his pressing entreaties to accompany him. To confess the truth, I was by no means sorry for the opportunity which this afforded me of travelling in safety through Grusia, a country long famous for its inhospitality to strangers; and, friendship apart, I believe I should have been willing to have undertaken the journey as a matter merely of curiosity.

The Grusians, though a conquered people, are in constant habits of hostility with their conquerors; and, to the extent of their power and of the opportunities afforded them, carry on a predatory kind of
fare, which is highly dangerous and annoying
intry so abounding in mountain and forest.

The roads also are scarcely practicable, being little more than a rarely-trodden track through wild ravines, by the side of falling torrents, which, rolling along masses of rock and timber, not unfrequently overwhelm the traveller in their course. Sheltered by rocks or lurking in woods, the barbarous inhabitants level an unerring aim, and with little danger to themselves pursue their predatory habits; whilst the traveller, whether merchant or soldier, solitary or in company, alike falls before them—or if he escape death, inevitably suffers, worse than death, slavery. For, to their shame be it spoken, though professing our holy religion, and generally wearing the badge of Christianity on their breasts, so ignorant are they of its tenets, so little do they practise the universal love and charity it enjoins, that they raise their arm against all mankind, and rob, murder, or enslave all who unhappily are driven by ill fortune or stimulated by curiosity to traverse their inhospitable country. Emboldened by the great advantage which a perfect knowledge of the passes and mountain paths gives them over strangers, who must trust to guides, not unfrequently ignorant or treacherous, they sometimes assemble in greater force, and venture to attack, when entangled in some narrow defile, even the considerable bodies of infantry,

occasionally sent to relieve the few garrisons scattered over their country.

Their boldness, especially shown on a recent occasion, when two companies of infantry, betrayed by a treacherous guide into an ambuscade, were totally destroyed, rendered precaution on our march doubly necessary. My friend the colonel aware of this, and to secure the men under his command from a similar misfortune, had obtained an escort of Chernooë-Morskoi Cossacks, or Cossacks of the Black Sea, to act as videttes and flying parties in advance.

These Cossacks are peculiarly well adapted for such service, being trained to be constantly on the alert, when before an enemy or in fear of a hidden attack. Besides, in consequence of the frequent inroads made into their country by those barbarous neighbours, they are accustomed to their mode of approach; and can discover traces of a meditated attack where the inexperienced would probably see nothing but peace, and believe themselves in perfect security.

The caution and forethought of the colonel were well justified by the event. We had not long been entangled in the almost inextricable mazes of the Caucasus, when the chief of the Cossack party assured our commander he had discovered

certain indications of an intended assault. He had seen a few of the enemy at a distance, scattered among the trees and masses of broken rock, who were evidently watching our movements and marking our course. As we advanced, they retired before us, avoiding a near approach, and apparently endeavouring to entice us to pursue them. The Cossack thought there was a strong body of them near at hand, lying in wait for our advance ; nor had the colonel any reason to doubt the correctness of this surmise.

We were at that time just about to enter on a long intricate defile, overhung by enormous trees and precipitous rocks, and through which a mountain torrent dashed furiously along. The sun had already set behind the opposite ridge, the evening was far advanced, and its broad shadows showed the approach of night. The gathering clouds, too, throwing "a browner horror o'er the woods," seemed big with tempest. Under these circumstances the colonel most judiciously determined to halt and bivouac his men, and not attempt the pass, until morning should afford them light to discover the enemy and counteract his movements. In the mean time he used every precaution against a surprise, placing videttes of Cossacks on the surrounding eminences, and doubling the sentinels of

his own men on the outposts. He also commanded the whole to sleep under arms, and strictly ordered the sentinels to fire instantly on any one who might approach, if the first challenge was not immediately answered.

Night had hardly closed in when the threatening tempest burst with unusual violence. The mountains echoed back the pealing thunder; broad flashes of lightning glared on the surface of the torrent; and the clouds, rent asunder, poured forth their waters in one unbroken sheet, increasing the darkness and horror of the scene. In short, it seemed a night made expressly for the enemy; such at least was the impression on the minds of both officers and men. The weary lay down on their arms to broken slumbers, but the more active and alert remained on the *qui vive*, hourly expecting an attack. Not that they were intimidated—their steady courage knew no fear—though on such a night, and in such a situation, the boldest might, without reproach, have felt an indescribable sensation of awful expectancy, enough to banish sleep and keep them watchful.

The colonel was among the most anxious on this occasion, though for his own safety he feared nothing. Marked alike by the gentlest manner, and the most undaunted courage, he was ready

prepared for every danger ; but he felt that the lives of his men were in his keeping ; that a single oversight, a single error might bring death or slavery on them all ; he felt that his responsibility was immense, and called for the most watchful care. Under this feeling, and in the anxious discharge of his duty, he ventured forth alone to reconnoitre the outposts and see that his men were on the alert. He had already nearly reached the farthest sentinel, and was challenged as he approached. Lost in reflections on the events of the night and in arrangements for the morrow, he did not instantly answer, and the soldier fired. The shot was repeated by the different sentinels along the line. The alarm was given ; the men stood to their arms ; and a strong party was detached towards the spot where the first musket was fired, to discover the cause of the alarm. There—(though years have since elapsed, tears flow afresh at the sad recital)—there they found their colonel stretched upon the ground ; their much-loved, their honoured commander, weltering in his blood. There was not a man in the regiment, however mean, but would have freely devoted his own life to save him ; and now, sight of woe ! they find him breathless and faint, prostrate from a wound inflicted by one of their own corps.

In the first movement of rage they would have sacrificed the unhappy author of their grief. In the first movement of despair the wretched man would have sacrificed himself. The reflection that he was the innocent cause of their misfortune, and had but fulfilled his duty in obeying the strict orders he had received, entered neither his mind nor that of his comrades. Nothing indeed but the feeble voice of their colonel calling on them to desist, could have restrained their hands, or checked the fatal course of their passion.

News of the sad event soon reached the main body ; and the men, deaf to orders and regardless of their own safety, rushed tumultuously forwards to the spot where their colonel was lying. He had by this time revived a little from the first shock of the wound ; and, persuading his men that it was less dangerous than they feared, he succeeded in calming the tumult, and restoring them to some degree of order. By his direction they bore him on his cloak back to the bivouac ; and, having placed him in the hands of his surgeon and immediate attendants, they returned, with reviving hope, to their stations.

The ball had passed through the knee joint. A wound of this nature, unless in the hands of the most skilful, is commonly fatal ; and unhappily

the surgeon of this regiment, though a well-disposed careful man, was no great proficient in the art of healing. The youth and vigour of the colonel for a day or two struggled with the ignorance of the surgeon, and our hopes of a favourable issue were hourly raised higher. Alas! they were raised only to fall again the more deeply. The elements seemed in league with the unskilful management of his wound. Every untoward circumstance—privation, exposure, tempestuous weather, united against our unfortunate commander, setting his youth and vigour at defiance.

The morning after this fatal accident, it was necessary to continue the march. Awed, perhaps, by our steady order and our vigilance, the enemy did not venture to attack us, so that we passed the defile without further accident; not, however, without further suffering.

The morning's dawn could scarcely dispel the gloom of night, so heavy were the clouds and so dark the atmosphere. The rain still fell in torrents; the wind still howled between the mountains, blowing with such concentrated force as frequently to drive both men and horses before it. In vain did we endeavour to screen the colonel from the tempest, to shelter him from the wind and rain by covering him with our cloaks, and

making a rude awning to the brancard on which he was borne. No awning was impervious to the rain, or could repel the piercing wind.

Another morning, and yet another rose, but brought no diminution of the tempest. If the rain subsided, or the wind ceased to blow for an instant, the next moment it returned with redoubled force.

Worn out by suffering, exhausted by fatigue, he was rapidly sinking out of life. His weakened frame could no longer resist the effects of exposure to the inclement air. A gangrene seized upon his wound, and at intervals his mind wandered in delirium—the melancholy presages that he was quickly passing to eternity.

During this long period of agony and sorrow, the old leader of the Cossacks watched over my friend with a father's care. There was something in the old man's air and manner commanding respect and love, the sure indication of a good heart and a well constituted mind. Whilst assisting me in the last sad offices of friendship, I often marked the unconscious tear hanging on his eyelid; and the ill-suppressed sigh not unfrequently betrayed the feelings which were working in his breast. His watchful kindness and delicacy of attention bore more than common traces of sym-

pathy in the sufferings of the colonel ; it was like the kindness and attention of an anxious and long-tried friend. His kindness had its reward ; it won him the love of all who were witness to it, and the colonel's dying thanks.

A few moments before he breathed his last, he beckoned the Cossack and myself towards him. Whilst we anxiously listened to catch his last commands, he feebly drew from his finger a ring, which putting towards me, he said in a voice scarcely audible, " How will my poor widowed mother bear this sad event? she lived but for me—how will my death rend her heart!—Give her this ring—tell her my dying thoughts are hers—tell her my dying words speak only of her—to your friendship I bequeath her sorrows—be as a son to her, and endeavour to breathe into her heart comfort and consolation." He paused for breath ; then, turning his closing eye towards my companion, said, " And you, kind Cossack, receive my dying thanks. When my eyes are closed in death, and my last breath has fled, watch over the safety of my friend—he is a stranger—to your honour and to your kindness let him look for safety and protection in this inhospitable land." Exhausted by the exertion he had made, he sank back upon the brancard ; whilst we hung over him

in silent grief. We watched his closing eye—we marked his parting breath; alas! in vain—a few short moments and his career on earth was terminated—the pain of death was passed.

Deep sorrow fell upon all the corps; every man in it lamented the colonel's death as a misfortune to himself. Scarce two-and-twenty summers had passed over his head, and yet, though so young, he had learnt so well the difficult art of command, that he had fixed on himself the love and admiration of his men; and they now bewailed his loss with unaffected grief.

Wrapt in his military cloak, we laid him in the cold earth. His soldiers' tears, as they stood mournful by, best told his praise; whilst their prayers and exclamations, as the grave closed over him, were his requiem and faithful eulogy. And must we leave thee thus—leave thy noble form to be torn, perhaps, from its grave by the ravening wolves of horrid Caucasus; not a stone to mark the spot where thou liest; no recording hand, save that of humble friendship, to commemorate thy worth! Many years have since passed away, and other griefs have borne heavily on me; but thy friendship is still youngest in my memory, thy loss is a still lamented sorrow.

Soon after the last sad duties had been paid to my

friend, we reached the spot at which the services of the party of Cossacks who accompanied us were to terminate. There, too, I thought would terminate my mortal career. Unused to the fatigues of a military life, worn out and harassed by constant watching, my health and strength completely failed ; my mind at the same time, yielding to listless despair, could not by any effort be roused to exertion. I felt myself totally incapable of proceeding to Tefflis, nor had I any longer a wish to do so ; I wished only for the grave.

The humane chief of the Cossacks saw my state ; and, remembering the last words of my dying friend, determined to make an effort to save me. With this view he proposed to carry me back to his village, and nurse me in his own cottage till I should have recovered strength to travel. I acceded to his proposal through very listlessness, not with any hope of saving my life ; which I had ceased to value. Indeed, I did not believe myself long for this world ; and whether I quitted it in the bivouac of the soldier, or in the hut of the Cossack, was a matter of indifference. I consented to be carried back, in the full expectation of finding my grave on the road. The care of the good chief, however, deceived this expectation ; and his friendly kindness, under the bless-

ing of Providence, saved me from impending death.

Slung in a kind of hammock between two horses, and wrapped in a bourka, (a sort of cloak made of camel's hair,) I was carried in safety to his village ; though I had already, many days before we reached it, become insensible to every thing that was passing near me. The morning dawned in vain for me ; in vain did the sun shed his beams around ; I saw nothing, I heard nothing, nor have I now the slightest recollection of any thing that occurred in the long interval which shut me from health and reason. The first glimmering of returning sense appeared to me as a vision of the night. I thought I saw a seraph flitting round me ; I fancied myself in the region of the blessed, and that an angel was ministering to my wants. An angel did, indeed, minister to my wants, if an earthly substance can bear that name ; and, if the dwelling of innocence and purity may be called blessed, then was I truly in the region of the blessed.

The friendly Cossack had brought me, through dangers and difficulties innumerable, to his cottage ; had laid me on his own couch, had watched me by day, had tended me by night ; whilst his daughter, emulating her father's goodness, shared

all his care and anticipated all my wants. How shall I clothe in words an idea of this angelic creature? Her form might be that of a celestial being; the purity of her mind was as Heaven itself.

Before my health was so far restored as to allow me to leave my couch and crawl about the neat little garden which surrounded the cottage, the rigours of winter had already commenced. The Cossack, who, during all this time had watched over me with a father's care, and marked my returning health with every demonstration of sincere joy, persuading me that to a convalescent a winter's journey in that rigorous climate would undo what had been gained by his own and his daughter's good nursing, urged me to spend the winter months under the shelter of his hospitable roof; and my guardian saint, his daughter, joined in the request. Solicitations of this nature were not to be resisted; nor did my inclination lead me to refuse a request which promised only gratification and delight. Each succeeding day had developed some new trait in their characters to love or admire; and as I could anticipate only pleasure in passing in their society, and under their cheerful roof, the dreary months of winter, their entreaties easily prevailed.

The intimacy following a nearer and longer acquaintance took nothing from my esteem and admiration ; but, on the contrary, daily added to them. There was a quiet dignity, a graceful ease in the manner of the old man, which marked him as a being of a superior order ; as one who had trodden the higher walks of society ; whilst the variety and extent of his attainments displayed a strong and highly cultivated mind. His daughter, too, though hiding her beauty under the coarse habit of a peasant, possessed the refinements of a polished education, adding lustre to her native grace and improving her intrinsic charms. They neither seemed adapted to the humble station in which I found them. Her slender hands were ill calculated for the domestic offices to which they were applied ; nor did the peasant labours of the field coincide with the calm, but elevated manner of her father. Every action also, and every thought to which they gave utterance, betrayed them as belonging to a superior class ; whilst the veil of melancholy and reserve spread over their conversation and general manner, even in their most cheerful and unguarded moments, led one to surmise that under the garb of Cossack peasants, they were concealing from the world some rankling sorrow, or some dark misfortune. Still, how-

ever, it was surmise only ; no allusion was ever made to a former state ; they pursued calmly and steadily the occupations of the station in which I found them, and their whole manner forbade the prying eye of curiosity to search deeper.

Thus day succeeded day, and week followed week, in uninterrupted, nay, increasing kindness on their part, though slightly tinctured with reserve ; and so much did they win my love and admiration, that I beheld with dread the progress of winter, as it told the approach of spring—the season when I was to leave them, perhaps for ever.

In their usages and modes of life, the Cossacks of the Black Sea are very similar to the other Cossack tribes ; soldiers in the field, peasants at home. They are so far independent as to be free from tribute to any greater power, and to be governed by their own laws and customs ; but so far dependent as to be obliged to perform military service, according to their own mode of discipline, when called upon. They are all irregular cavalry ; and, on those occasions, they are armed, clothed, and mounted at their individual expense. Each man serves originally in the ranks ; and they are promoted to command according to merit. The rank which they hold when on service makes but

little change in their mode of life when at home. When they return to their villages, they lay aside their arms and military dress, resuming their peasant garb and rustic occupations. To cultivate a small portion of land, to dig their little gardens, to hunt, or to fish, constitute then their chief employments.

In such occupations my kind host passed his mornings: when the season did not admit his labours in the field or garden, he would wander out with his gun or grey-hound, sometimes alone, sometimes claiming me as his companion. The evenings glided rapidly by in the sweet society of his daughter: during our absence she would busy herself in household affairs; but, as evening approached, we ever found her arrayed in smiles to welcome our return. When the severer rigours of winter interrupted our sports, and detained us whole mornings at home, the intervals of conversation were often filled by some few choice books which adorned their cottage. Thus the days passed on in peace; the daughter resting all her happiness on her father's smile, the father living only in his daughter. Each was to the other all that this world held of good. She appeared as a lily in the desert, and he as the venerable oak, bowed, not broken by the storm.

The slow progress of increasing intimacy dissipated, by insensible degrees, the shadow of reserve spread over his conversation; our thoughts, our ideas seemed gradually to amalgamate, our minds imperceptibly to blend into one; and at length, in all the freedom of confiding friendship, his heart opened, and he made me the depository of his woes.

It was on the evening of a day early in spring, when the casual sunbeam began to dispel the cheerless gloom of winter, and thus reminding us of the approaching hour of separation, had given to our feelings a tinge of melancholy and regret, that he first made me acquainted with the origin of his grief. We had been long sitting in silence, each, perhaps, busied in tracing his own thoughts, or in endeavouring to decipher those which were passing through the mind of the other, though apparently listening in mute attention to the sweet voice of his daughter, who, in a soft under tone, was singing a simple Polish air. The tune seemed to recall past recollections to his memory, and revive thoughts and feelings which he had in vain endeavoured to subdue. His eye fixed itself unconsciously on his daughter, whilst the big tear stole down his cheek, and his whole expression betrayed the working of a deeply agitated mind.

At length she ceased ; still, however, his looks rested upon her, and his soul still seemed to vibrate to the chord she had struck. It was not until after a long interval that, exerting no common effort to rouse himself and shake off the feelings which oppressed him, he remarked my sympathizing but inquiring gaze. " You look, my friend," said he, " with an inquiring eye at my unusual tears, and your heart sympathizes in the woes which called them forth. Yes, I have known sorrow ;—griefs which have destroyed my peace, and driven me in anguish from the world. Their record is deeply marked in this sunken eye, this furrowed cheek. And thou, poor innocent," he continued, turning a glance of unspeakable affection on his daughter, " why wert thou also doomed to suffer ? Why wert thou also torn from the abode of thy fathers, and driven to these horrid wilds ? How my heart bleeds when I think of thy hard fate ! for when the grave shall have closed on thy unhappy parent, who will protect his child ? "

After a pause of some minutes, in which he seemed lost in prayer for the happiness of his daughter, he resumed his usual composure. " You would wish to know," said he, " the history of my life, and of the disastrous events which have driven

me to seek, in a Cossack hut, a refuge from the miseries of the world, I will not conceal it from you. Your friendship is worthy of my whole confidence; and I will not withhold the narration of my sufferings, though the recital will be a painful task, and must give renewed force to feelings and passions I have been long struggling to suppress."

The narrative, which he then commenced, drew from me many a tear and many an involuntary sigh; it stamped itself so deeply on my memory that neither time nor circumstance has been able to weaken the impression. Years have since gone by. Now grown old, and weary of the amusements of the world, I feel but little interest in the passing scene. My chief pleasure now is derived from the recollections of my younger years. These sometimes glide in review before me; and, seizing on my whole attention, seem to recal the hopes and fears, and re-excite the feelings of happier hours. When wandering thus in imagination back to the scenes of former days, the good Cossack and his affecting story are ever first in my thoughts. Memory then shows him to me with a freshness undiminished by the lapse of time, and I fancy I still see him, as when the soft accents of

his daughter's voice called forth the tear which stole down his care-worn cheek. I fancy I still hear him, as when in deep-impassioned tones he commenced the following history of his unhappy life.

CHAPTER II.

MY sorrows began even in my childhood ; for I was yet scarcely more than an infant when my father, the Baron Dubroffski, after having a thousand times faced the destroyer Death in all the horrid forms he assumes in war, met at last a soldier's fate whilst fighting in the cause of the unfortunate Stanislaus of Poland. In his last moments he bequeathed me to the care of the Count Zabloffka ; claiming, in the sacred name of friendship, protection and support for his orphan child. The Count did not deceive the anticipations of my father's confidence ; he was faithful to the trust reposed in him, and cherished me as his own son.

Shortly after the death of my father, the unfortunate issue of the battle of Pultava having wrecked all the hopes of the ill-fated Stanislaus, and, by depriving him of aid from the Swedes, given his rival, Augustus, possession of the throne ; those Poles who had most nobly resisted the usurpations of the Russian power, were constrained to yield to the tempest they could not quell, and

either fly for shelter to a foreign land, or retire to the less secure protection of their own remote estates. Among those who pursued the latter course was the Count Zabloffka. He withdrew, for the time, from all interference in public affairs, and retired to a castle he possessed in Podalia. There endeavouring to forget, in the peaceful occupations of domestic life, the crosses and vexations of the world, he spent his days in the care and education of Helena, his only daughter; and of me, his adopted son. I cannot revert to that scene of early happiness without feelings of deep regret; for thence sprang the only pleasures I ever knew, and thence also sprang those evils which have driven me from the world.

The Countess Helena was blessed with a yielding gentleness of temper which won all to love her; and her person was of the most enchanting form, distinguished by an unaffected grace more pleasing still than beauty. But to me she was beauty's self; I regarded her as a sister, and saw in her every perfection that can adorn a woman. She, too, whilst calling me by the name of brother, had learnt to feel for me the fond partiality that name implies. Thus we grew together, our hopes, our wishes, ever the same; and the passing years, though they took something from the unre-

strained fondness of childish intercourse, gave, perhaps, a deeper tone to our affection.

I was her senior by several years, and had long suffered myself to indulge in fond anticipations of future happiness, when my airy visions were interrupted by the presence of the Count Razumoff. This nobleman possessed large estates in the neighbouring district, but, from his having espoused an opposite party to the Count Zabloffka in the civil wars, little intercourse had hitherto taken place between them; and, as they also differed widely in their habits, there did not appear any probability of his ever becoming an inmate at the castle. By some unhappy chance, however, he had once seen the Countess Helena; when her graceful person and pleasing manners made a deep impression on his heart. In the indulgence of his passion, he forgot the obstacles which were opposed to it; he forgot that he had borne arms against the banished monarch, for whom the Count Zabloffka had fought and suffered; he forgot that his dissolute habits were notorious, and that on account of these he had been shunned by her father, as much as he was hated for the party he had espoused; or, if he remembered all this, he remembered it only to devise means of removing the barrier thus opposed to his wishes. He knew he could not be

received an inmate at the castle on his own merits; and, until he ceased to be a stranger there, he could hardly expect by any art to succeed in obliterating the impression which existed against him in the mind of both Helena and her father. His first object, therefore, was to devise a plan by which he might become their guest; and, as the Count Zabloffka was living in a kind of voluntary exile, shunning the court and every thing connected with the existing government, Razumoff proposed to himself to represent this conduct to Augustus in a favourable light, and insist at the same time on the great advantage to be derived from his support. He knew that were he in consequence made the bearer of offers of reconciliation, he would be insured a reception at the castle; and, however the proposals might be received, he thought that his pleasing person and polished manners would subdue the ill opinion which existed against him. In part of this scheme he was successful, and soon presented himself to us in all the pomp of a feudal lord, with a long retinue of armed followers in his suite, displaying at once his wealth and power. Zabloffka yielded nothing on that occasion to Razumoff in the splendour of his household, or in the gallant appearance of his retainers; but entertained his guest in a princely

style, though still regarding him with a feeling of distrust.

Scarcely had he been welcomed as a minister of the court, when he began to seek for an opportunity of declaring to Helena the secret object of his wishes. It was his intention to do this in private, free from the restraint of Zabloffka's presence; trusting that his ardent declarations might then find a way to Helena's unsuspecting bosom, and that through her he might overcome the aversion of her father. He did not, however, rely entirely on his persuasive powers; but came prepared, in case of a repulse, to try more daring measures.

The opportunity he sought was not long wanting. Deceived by dark hints of dangers threatening her father, conveyed through one of her own women, from a follower of Razumoff, she had consented to a private interview with the man, who offered to make a full disclosure of what those dangers were. It was agreed, that as soon as night should enable him to absent himself from his comrades without exciting their suspicions, he should meet Helena in a remote part of the castle; where a corridor, communicating with the outer court, would allow him to enter with little risk of being discovered. But though she consented to

this scheme, she did not place implicit reliance on the integrity of her informant, and therefore wished for the advice of that friend who, she knew, would be a faithful counsellor. It was to me she turned her thoughts; for on me she had been accustomed, almost from infancy, to repose her hopes and fears; and through her favourite attendant, Verinka, she desired to speak privately with me in her room.

The unusual injunction of secrecy filled me with conjecture; and, hastening to her apartment, I found her anxiously awaiting me, and evidently affected by some extraordinary cause of solicitude or alarm. I entreated her to tell me whether any thing had distressed her, when she interrupted me by exclaiming, "That dreadful Count Razumoff! And is it possible his insidious mission from the court should be made a cloak for deeds, perhaps, of murder! But this night will clear up the mystery, and I shall learn from one of his chief agents the particulars of the plot he has been forming against my father."

She then detailed to me the purport of the hints by which she had been so much alarmed; the promises of discovery made her by Razumoff's follower, and the arrangements for their interview. A burst of light now flashed across my mind. I

instantly remembered the looks and sighs which had betrayed to me his secret passion ; and the mystery of his loitering slaves, who perpetually watched my steps, was now explained. " Go, Helena," I said, " go without fear ; for whatever danger threatens I will be at hand to shield you."

On leaving her apartment I summoned Leontovich, my faithful servant, to attend me ; and with him I made the necessary arrangements to guard Helena from the dangers which appeared to menace her. We immediately concealed some of Zabloffka's most trusty vassals in situations commanding the entrances of the appointed corridor ; after which, we secreted ourselves in places whence we could see and hear whatever might occur. Scarcely had we taken our stations when we perceived Razumoff's principal retainer creeping cautiously along the corridor. Five or six others followed, whom he disposed in recesses and behind pillars, where they might remain perfectly concealed ; and, having motioned them to be silent and vigilant, he then posted himself behind a buttress near the door.

In the anxious interval which yet remained to the hour of meeting, the moments seemed to steal by with leaden pace. My thoughts were racked with conjecture. Each breath of air that mur-

mured through the vaulted roof made my heart beat painfully, for in every sound I fancied Helena's step. At length she came, and her presence so completely restored my confidence that my fears for her safety almost vanished, and I constrained myself to watch patiently the full development of their plans.

I had not long to wait: the opening door soon discovered, not the base wretch by whose promised confessions Helena had been deceived, but Razumoff himself. A chill horror for a moment fixed her to the spot; but, suddenly recovering, she turned and was about to fly. Razumoff then pressed forward, and, throwing himself at her feet, declared the violence of his passion in terms disguised with the appearance of delicacy and truth. She heard him with forbearance and answered him with courtesy; and even in repelling him, retained her native gentleness. But Razumoff was not of a nature to be so repulsed. Vehemently exclaiming that her refusal would drive him to desperation, and compel him to have recourse to other means, he called to his vassals to come forth and bear her from the castle. A look of dismay, a cry of terror, were Helena's only answer, when she saw the men issue from their hiding places, and felt their ruffian hands already laid upon her.

Frantic and terrified, she shrieked, "Dubroffski! —Oh, rescue me, Dubroffski!" At her call I rushed on the astonished Razumoff, and dashed the villain to the earth. His men were for a moment palsied with amazement; and before they had time to rally or put themselves in a posture of defence, my numerous followers had started forth from their concealment. Resistance was in vain; they threw down their coward weapons, and implored our mercy; whilst Helena, released from their grasp, flew to my arms, and poured out tears of thankfulness on my bosom. Oh! what a moment of extreme delight! for then I only felt her grateful tears—I only thought upon her love! Razumoff and his base crew were unheeded. I recked not of his scowling glance as he raised himself from the earth, and fixed on me a look of furious anger and despair! I heard not the torrent of reproaches and threats poured forth, as he gave vent to the bitterness of his soul! All was alike lost upon me! Helena alone filled my mind!

In the mean time Zabloffka and his household, roused by the alarm which had spread through the castle, were already in arms; some hurried towards the corridor, others were active in securing the remainder of Razumoff's men. Of these many might have offered resistance; but, scattered as

they were, and without a leader, their individual courage availed them nothing ; and in little more time than it has taken me to narrate it, they were all made prisoners.

No sooner had Zabloffka learnt the particulars of the outrage, than his fiercest indignation was kindled against Razumoff, whose attempts towards palliation or excuse did but add meanness to his crime. In the first impulse of rage Zabloffka would have sacrificed him to his vengeance ; but in this tumult of angry passion Helena's gentle and forgiving nature stepped between her father and the object of his wrath. Calmed in some measure by her persuasions, he struggled to subdue the violence of his irritated feelings ; and, turning contemptuously towards Razumoff, said, " Go, detested wretch ! your life is spared at the prayer of her you have so basely injured : go, carry to your master the history of your treachery ! Zabloffka will not be guilty of your death." This forbearance, by freeing him from the dread of a punishment he deserved, revived his faltering confidence ; and he exclaimed, " I despise your pretended clemency, and will requite it with eternal hatred and deadly vengeance.—And you, Dubroffski, think not to escape my wrath, you have forced yourself between me and happiness—have

dishonoured me with a vile blow—offences which you dearly shall atone for!” We heard no more, for the retainers of Zabloffka, eagerly obeying their master’s command, thrust him with execrations beyond the castle gates.

Thus we believed our dangers ended: to his parting threats we gave no heed, but, congratulating each other on our happy escape from misery, returned to the peaceful enjoyment of our tranquil hours with renewed delight. Helena, regarding me as her deliverer from past dangers, ever blessed me with her sweetest thanks; and Zabloffka, believing that I should always prove a faithful guardian to his child, saw with pleasure that each day increased our mutual passion. Thus the months and years continued to glide gently by, without further interruption to their quiet course, till they at length brought on the happy time when Heaven, listening to my prayers, realized my dearest wishes. Can I ever forget when, yielding to my soft persuasion and faithful love, Helena first consented to be mine? or when her father first gave her blushing to my fond embrace? Oh! never, never. Heaven shed its choicest blessing on that hour, and memory cherishes it as a sacred treasure.

Our lives continued to pass, for some time after

our marriage, in security and peace, when a storm which had long been gathering round, at last burst over us with destructive fury. Jealousies and contentions had sprung up among the partisans of Augustus, whose weak and unsuccessful efforts to suppress them did but increase their violence. At the same time, the factious nobles, unrestrained by an authority they little feared, pursued their individual quarrels and private feuds with more than usual rancour, devastating the country with the horrors of civil war.

In this scene of anarchy the friends of Stanislaus once more raised their hopes; and, profiting by the divisions of their opponents, formed plans for rallying round the standard of their fallen monarch. They were already beginning to meet in arms; and many powerful nobles, who but lately had been wandering as exiles from their country, now returned and re-assembled their vassals with fresh confidence. They derived strength from their unanimity, whilst their enemies were weakened by dissensions.

The spirit of faction roused the hopes or alarmed the fears of every individual and every party; nor did Zabloffka escape its influence. Though the hand of time had stolen from him much of the activity and vigour of youth, it had left his spirit

unquelled: he yet heard with satisfaction that the cause in which he had bled was again resuming strength; and the recollection of former achievements revived in his breast the ardour of his younger days. He longed once more to appear in arms, but his judgment, sobered by years and matured by experience, led him, ere he openly declared himself, to watch for a time the progress of events.

In the interval, my ambition was unhappily roused by the frequent recital of my father's deeds; and when the old Count would dwell with delight on the actions of his friend, or detail the story of his death, a tumult of unusual passion thrilled my mind, and I longed to emulate his fame. When, therefore, the adherents of Stanislaus had acquired so much strength that Zabloffka no longer hesitated to declare his intention of joining them, I yielded to my newly-excited ardour for military fame, and prepared for a temporary separation from my beloved Helena.

But as the time drew near when I was to lead a body of Zabloffka's retainers to the field, my idle longing for distinction ceased to blind me to the misery of parting from her I held dearer than life itself; this was a prospect which could bear only a distant view, softened by the mist of excited

hopes. Helena nearly sank under the efforts she made to conceal her grief, that her tears might not reproach me; she presented an object of distress which pierced me to the soul. How willingly would I then have receded from my purpose! but false shame still urged me on, and plunged me in a gulf of wretchedness; from whence, alas! there was no return.

When hanging on my bosom, she has poured forth the sorrows of her heart in all the tenderness of love, how worthless have appeared to me those idle aspirations after fame! Had I but then listened to the misgivings of my own mind, or the secret impulse of a better power, I might perhaps even now have been happy, even now have possessed the blessing of my Helena's love, and been a stranger to the sorrow which consumes me. But I must not repine. The ways of Heaven are inscrutable; and if my Helena has been taken in pity from the miseries of this world, her sainted spirit still hovers near to breathe resignation into her widowed husband's mind, and to watch over and protect her orphan daughter.

Zabloffka designed to send me forwards with a detachment to join the confederates, whilst he should exert himself in collecting together the remainder of his peasantry and vassals. The castle

re-echoed with the sounds of preparation for our march ; an air of busy importance sat on every face ; each heart beat high with expectation, and every hand was actively employed in furbishing and repairing accoutrements or arms, in training horses, or preparing ammunition and other necessities for the campaign. It was, indeed, a spirit-stirring time. Yet in the midst of all this bustle I did not forget how necessary it would be for my comfort, to provide a secure means of communication with Helena and her father, and therefore left my trusty Leontovich with them, whom they could at all times use as a faithful and zealous messenger.

The hour appointed for my departure at length arrived, and the gallant men who were to follow me were already drawn up in order without the castle gates. But still I lingered ere I joined them, for I had still a mournful duty to perform. It yet remained to tear myself from all that was dear to me on earth. Alas ! how difficult the task ! Whilst Helena hung on my neck weeping and distracted, her father stood near in silent grief. The big tear starting from his eye told the agitation of his mind, till, at last, unable to restrain his feelings, he seized my hand, and exclaiming, in a broken voice, " God bless you, my child,

God bless you," hurried from the apartment to conceal his tears. Helena fainted in my arms. Stealing that moment of insensibility, I consigned her to the care of Verinka, and turned to leave her ; but my heart repelled the vain endeavour, and still brought me back to breathe one prayer, imprint one parting kiss ; and often did I turn again to bless her, ere with unwilling steps I could force myself away.

Slowly, and with an aching heart, I passed through the castle gateway. The wind that murmured along its arched roof, seemed to sigh, " adieu !" and every trivial circumstance—the lowering sky—the distant storm—called fresh forebodings to my mind, and added a deeper shade to my grief. My men, witnesses of my distress, moved on in silence ; and the closing evening soon shut from our sight those towers on which our looks so fondly lingered.

With the morning's dawn we renewed our march, and after a few days progress through some of the fairest parts of Poland, we joined the confederates assembled at Tulchin. Here we found several nobles met in arms, though with a force far inferior in number, and in a worse state of organization than fame had represented. The unanimity which had at first directed their coun-

sels, began already to be disturbed by little jealousies, and the rivalry of command. Each petty noble, with his few ragged followers, bore himself as an independent chief, and yielded unwilling submission to the decisions of a council in which his name was not the first. In their debates, clamour and confusion drowned the voice of sober judgment, and they not unfrequently maintained their defective arguments by the sword. Whilst the heads of the party were so divided, but little discipline could be kept up amongst their followers. These, for the most part, rather resembled so many separate bands of robbers, than soldiers met to fight in so good a cause. Ill clothed, ill armed, badly disciplined, and worse commanded, each body of vassals acknowledged the authority of no one but their immediate lord. Their only virtue was their courage, and even this was not rarely perverted to acts of plunder and devastation; for, straitened by slender means, or ruined fortunes, many of the chiefs found it impossible to maintain their hungry followers in the field, without preying upon their devoted country.

These dissensions,—this almost systematic confusion, augured but badly for the cause in which we were engaged; since our opponents, suspending their quarrels at the approach of danger, had

assembled round the commander appointed by their sovereign. This commander was Razumoff. An indefinable sensation of terror crept through my veins when I first heard his name rumoured as our principal antagonist ; and events have shown but too fatally the justness of my fears.

To a more than common talent for intrigue, and all the arts by which men rise in troubled times, was added in his person considerable military skill, wealth, and power ; all together pointing him out as the most leading character among the adverse party. Augustus, therefore, in naming him to the command, obeyed the dictates of a prudent foresight, well knowing that to zeal for the public cause would be added the vigilance of private hatred, for his adventure at the castle of Zabloffka, and his threat of unrelenting vengeance, had been rumoured abroad with all the exaggeration of common fame.

The advance of Razumoff's army quelled for a time the animosities and contentions of the confederates, and gave a more sober character to their deliberations. They reconciled their jarring individual interests at the approach of danger, endeavouring to promote by unanimity the general advantage, since cool reflection and common sense told them that, if broken, their force must easily

be subdued. The first fruit of their agreement was a determination to choose, from among themselves, a commander with undivided authority; and their election fell on the brave Pototski, whose retainers were more numerous and better appointed than any others in the field. Viewing with approbation the gallant appearance of the little band which followed me, he named me his lieutenant, a distinction which excited feelings of jealousy in some of my older comrades, though it obtained their public assent.

We were at that time in a part of the country belonging to Pototski. To save his estates from the destructive presence of his allies, as well as to profit by the reviving confidence which the return of unanimity had given them, he determined to lead them immediately towards the enemy. This, he believed, would be attended with every advantage their circumstances allowed, and he hoped their united courage might be used with success for an unexpected attack, though the enemy's army was stronger and better organized than his own.

The order to march, then, was given, and heard with universal satisfaction; for all felt the privations of their actual situation, and were eager for a change. By break of day we were on the alert,

every thing was in motion, and, shortly after, the whole army was advancing. Destitute as we were of artillery and camp equipage, of many essential necessities, and of every encumbrance, the plan of our march was soon arranged. My little troop, which consisted of well-armed cavalry, took the lead; Pototski's men, also principally cavalry, brought up the rear; whilst the centre was composed of a motley crew of half-clothed, ill-armed peasants, a wretched substitute for infantry. In this order we moved on, trusting to our celerity and courage for success.

We had not continued our route many days ere we discovered flying parties of the enemy hovering near, a circumstance which plainly told us our hopes of surprising him were completely frustrated. Pototski had, indeed, to contend with a much more skilful general than himself, though with a less brave man; and Razumoff, who early learnt our march, and knew the headlong character of our commander, took every precaution to turn it to his own advantage. He knew that we were deficient in cavalry, and totally destitute of artillery, with both of which he was well provided; his object, therefore, was to draw us into an open part of the country, where his cavalry and artillery would give him a decided superiority. Had Pototski

been cautious as he was brave, he would, when he found his first plan traversed, have retired to a mountainous district, where he might long have defended himself, and have tempted, perhaps, other partisans of Stanislaus to join his cause: but so far from adopting this prudent course, he allowed himself to be hurried along by his own rashness; and yielding at the same time to the murmurs of his troops, (a class of men generally more willing to rush blindly on certain destruction than to bear the harrassing fatigue and privations of a retreat,) he determined to pursue the enemy who apparently retired in fear before him.

This seeming retreat of Razumoff was a mere feint, calculated to entice Pototski forwards; whilst, by the constant harrassing attacks of small detached bodies, cutting off supplies and destroying his foraging parties, his force was materially weakened, and the possibility of a retreat at last effectually prevented. In this predicament we found ourselves in an open country, without supplies of any sort, without artillery, with little ammunition, and worn out by a long and fatiguing march, when Razumoff, by a retrograde movement, plainly declared his intention. At this critical juncture, we also discovered another body of troops advancing on our rear.

Hemmed in on every side, with no chance of victory, no hope in flight, the courage of the men forsook them ; their spirits fell, and an universal panic spread disorder through the lines. In vain did Pototski endeavour to rally their fallen courage, to restore them to order, to rouse them to a bold effort ; his voice was unheard, his authority disregarded ; nothing could make them understand that their only prospect of safety was in a brave defence. Razumoff meanwhile pressing onwards, and beginning to play upon us with his artillery, extinguished the few sparks of valour yet remaining in the breasts of our panic-struck infantry. Unhappy wretches ! Blinded by their fears, and deaf to the voice of command, they threw away their arms, and dispersing, thought to find safety in a shameful flight. But Razumoff knew not mercy ; he gave loose to carnage, and, in a few short minutes, the plain was a scene of indiscriminate slaughter, a mangled heap of unresisting peasants.

Whilst the shattered infantry were dispersed, and flying in dismay before the enemy, the few cavalry who continued steady, closing their thinned ranks, rallied round their general, and in that moment of peril, displayed more than common valour. If mere human courage could have availed them, they must have been saved. Pototski's

presence of mind remained unshaken by the destruction which surrounded him, and he sought to effect a retreat for the knot of brave men who still adhered to him, by endeavouring with a desperate effort to cut a way through the opposing columns. "Come on, my brave fellows," he exclaimed, "and let us conquer or fall like soldiers;" when the men answering with a loud hurra, rushed impetuously forwards, bearing for a space every obstacle before them. For a moment the prospect of forcing a retreat was opened to us, but the next shut it from our sight for ever. The destructive fire of the artillery, overthrowing whole ranks of men and horses at every volley, even in the commencement of our career, numbered Pototski with the slain. With him fell many of his bravest men. The remaining few closed round me, and we again dashed forwards with all the violence of despair. In our onset, I encountered Razumoff, who was bearing down upon us at the head of a strong detachment of fresh troops, and engaged him hand to hand. Our contest was of no long duration. The sight of me, his rival, almost within his power, gave increased virulence to his rage, and, blind with passion, he drove headlong on without his usual caution. Intent only on attacking me, he neglected to defend himself, and laid his breast

open to my sword. He fell, gasping for breath. Almost at the same instant my horse received a ball in his forehead, and rearing, fell backwards with me to the ground: oppressed by his weight, and entangled in his trappings, I was easily overpowered and made prisoner.

How dreadful were then my feelings!—wounded, disarmed, in the power of my mortal enemy. Life seemed to vanish from my sight, whilst death stood gaping on me, pointing to the dungeon and the scaffold. The excitement of attack had subsided, and despondency, quick succeeding, presented to my imagination the axe of the executioner and the assassin's dagger. The thoughts of home, of those I had left behind, of the fond wife, the kind father, then rising in my mind, brought with them deep regret and hopeless terrors. Dejected and despairing, I looked in vain around for some faint hope—no hope was left; and the memory of the endearments I had relinquished, of the thousand nameless joys I had forsaken, gave a poignancy to my grief bordering on distraction; scarcely could I refrain from tears.

Silent and sad, lost in melancholy reflections, and almost unconscious of the surrounding horrors, but little heeding the shout of victory or the groans of the expiring vanquished, I was marched away

to the rear under a strong escort, with a few other poor fellows, who, like myself, were wounded prisoners. In the course of the day, some men, whom I immediately recognised as having been among Razumoff's attendants at the castle of Zabloffka, were added to our guard, and under their guidance, we were detached from the army. From them I learned that Razumoff's wound was not considered dangerous, and, to my horror, I also understood that they were conducting me to a castle he possessed on the borders of Volhinia. His object in sending me thither was evident. I was well aware that a dungeon and chains, or a midnight dagger, would there be my fate ; and a feeling of desperation, aided by the natural love of life, roused all my energies and gave activity to my thoughts, in endeavouring to devise some means of evading it. But it was to little purpose I racked my invention and scrutinized my escort ; my mind was without resource, and the ferocious air of the guards repelled all expectation of bribing them. From this dreadful state of suffering no hand could deliver me, save that of Providence ; my only hope was in Heaven, and its mercy directed me to safety, when every earthly hope had fled.

We had continued to march through the day at a rapid pace, under a scorching sun, and when, in

the evening, we arrived at the village where we were to pass the night, the guards were hardly less exhausted by hunger and fatigue than their prisoners. In this condition, which made them drink deep and eagerly, they began a carousal that soon ended in drunken riot. Flushed with victory, they gave loose to vulgar mirth, and the glass went quickly round in answer to the shout or boisterous song. As night advanced, the tumult gradually subsiding, told us that sleep began to oppress their senses. Every thing then soon became still; no other sound was heard than that of the sentinels snoring on their watch, at the door of the hovel in which we were confined.

Now was the favourable moment to make our last effort for life and liberty. With beating heart and breathless anxiety, I cautiously roused my sleeping companions, and, in a whisper, proposed to them to seize the opportunity which was offered for escape. No art was wanting to persuade them; the chance of freedom gave new life to their hopes, and all were eager for the attempt. In silence and with caution, we commenced the undertaking by endeavouring to remove a plank from the low roof of the wood-built cottage which formed our prison. After a long effort we succeeded, and liberty again dawned—again it shone

upon us, whilst despondency and fear fled together. The sentinels still were sleeping; fatigue and drunkenness oppressed their senses. Without uttering a sound, we crept through the aperture, and descending carefully to the ground, we breathed once more the air of freedom.

As we stole silently along, anxious to pass the village unobserved, some prowling wolf-dogs came baying at our heels. Unfortunately this awoke some of the villagers, who thus discovering our flight, gave an alarm, and the whole place was in a few seconds thrown into tumult and commotion. The cottage windows glared with lights, the soldiers, roused from sleep, rushed into the street, firing their muskets for the most part without aim or object, though some, less drunken than their comrades, caught sight of us, and followed close upon our traces. Happily the confusion favoured us. The better to escape, we each took a different direction, and, commending ourselves to Heaven, pressed on as rapidly as fatigue and wounds allowed. I saw no more of my comrades; a few saved themselves, but the rest were taken. For myself, struggling through the night with hunger and fatigue, with anxiety and alarm—more suffering and weary in mind than even in body—I continued my course onwards, sometimes walking and

sometimes running, but without in the least knowing the road I happened to take. The dread that I might be returning towards Razumoff's army frequently stopped my flight, but soon the fear of my pursuers again urged me forwards. In such painful exertions the night passed heavily along, and the rising morning found me quite exhausted, at the verge of a dense forest. Gathering my little remaining strength, I feebly pushed aside the opposing brambles, and sought, in its deep shade, shelter from the betraying light of day. At length perfectly overcome, and unable to continue my course any farther, I sank at the root of a spreading oak. Exhaustion and fatigue had quite subdued me; I sat listless and inanimate, wishing for death, till sleep, stealing over my senses, gave a short respite to my suffering.

After a few hours' repose, I awoke considerably refreshed; and, though still weak from exhaustion and excessive hunger, the agitation of my spirits was tranquillized by rest. I could now review the events of the night with thankfulness, and look forwards to the morrow with hope. To supply the cravings of my famished appetite I gathered some wild berries, and moistened my parched lips at a running stream; then returning to the shelter of the oak, I again threw myself on the ground,

waiting the approach of evening to resume my course. When the sun sank below the horizon, and the increasing darkness again promised to conceal my flight, I left the forest, and continued my devious route. Unacquainted with the road, and not knowing to what part of the country I had wandered, I some time hesitated in deciding what direction to take, but, at length, resolved to follow, at all risks, the first path I might chance to find.

Long and wearisome was the way I took ; I toiled through the night with languid steps, and morning was already near at hand ere I was cheered by the distant baying of a dog, and attracted forwards by a feeble light glimmering from a cottage window. I approached it with caution, and looked earnestly through the half-opened door, endeavouring to discover the character of its inmates. An aged man, and a woman bearing an infant in her arms, presented no objects of alarm, and I entered with confidence. But how was I surprised when the old man, throwing himself on his knees, and touching my feet with his hand, welcomed me with a cry of wonder. It was Vassilieff, one of the most devoted of my own vassals, and one whose fidelity had already been proved to me on many occasions.

Wandering without a guide in the obscurity of the night, through woods, and along rarely-trodden paths, my steps had unconsciously turned towards the patrimony of my fathers. I found myself on the verge of my own estate, and a glow of unexpected delight for an instant warmed my breast ; but these pleasurable feelings soon passed away, for I learned from Vassilieff that my property was already taken possession of by the enemy, that I was proclaimed a traitor, and a price set upon my head. “ But fear nothing,” he continued, “ my dear master, in the cottage of Vassilieff you will find safety ; its poverty will escape suspicion ; and my son-in-law, who is brave and active, will be constantly on the alert to warn us of danger.” Whilst Vassilieff was informing me of these events, and occupied in making a little plan for my concealment, his daughter busied herself in preparing me some food ; but my appetite was by that time gone, I no longer wished for nourishment ; the sensation of hunger had given place to a gnawing pain, and I could only swallow a little water. It was to no purpose they pressed me to eat, my lips closed against the food, and I threw myself, without having tasted any, on their bed, hoping to compose myself to rest. But my hope of rest was vain ; sleep fled from my eye-lids. My feelings

had been too highly wrought by contending passions for my weakened strength to bear ; and my thoughts began to wander in delirium. Illusory images of all I dearest loved and most regretted, played before my mind ; sometimes wearing a look of pleasure, though oftener of desolation. Frequently starting from my bed I paced the room, striving to dispel the dreadful vision ; then again threw myself on the pallet, and tried to close my eyes, but all in vain ; a burning fever raged in my veins, and overcame every effort to repose, till nature exhausted could endure no more, and closed the avenues of sense and reason.

Many days had passed by in unconsciousness, ere the abating fever restored me to a sense of misery ; and many more had gone by in sorrow, ere the kind nursing of Vassilieff and his daughter brought strength to raise me from the bed of sickness. As soon as I could crawl abroad I was eager to resume my journey, for by no effort could I quiet the fears which arose from my incertitude respecting the safety of Helena and Zabloffka. One circumstance, however, still detained me a few days longer. Vassilieff, in his attentive forethought, had, during the height of the fever, despatched his son-in-law to Zabloffka ; and we now hourly expected his return. Anxiously hoping

to receive some token of Helena's welfare, I numbered the minutes through another week ; but morning rose, and evening fell, in slow succession, yet no messenger arrived. Restless with solicitude, I could no longer check my feelings of impatience ; so, bidding adieu to my humble and faithful host, I set forwards disguised in a peasant's dress.

CHAPTER III.

SICKNESS and sorrow had so changed me that I feared not to be discovered through the disguise I had assumed; therefore, thinking it unnecessary to continue the precaution of travelling only in the night, I walked boldly forwards during the light of day. At night I rested in some peasant's shed, and the dawn saw me again urging my steps towards the goal of all my hopes. For four successive days I still toiled on, the excitement of hope and fear giving me strength to endure the fatigues of the long and weary journey. The fifth noon found me at the base of a hill, from the top of which might be seen the castle of Zabloffka; and the consciousness of being once again so near the dwelling-place of all that was dear to me on earth, gave a painful intensity to the feelings which had cheered or alarmed my breast.

Panting with fatigue and straining every nerve, I quickly gained the summit of the hill; love, and hope, and fond anticipations thrilling in my heart. Breathless with joy I turned an eager gaze to-

wards the home of my youth—the abode of my tenderest affections, and beheld, oh! dreadful sight! a mass of smoking ruins. It seemed illusion; but a second glance convinced me of the terrible reality. Horror and amazement seized my mind—a cry of agony burst from my lips—all sense forsook me, and, staggering, I fell to the earth, overwhelmed with terror and despair.

How long I remained insensible, I know not; but when returning consciousness brought with it a sense of the devastation which surrounded me, the evening was far advanced.

Heart-broken and sinking under a weight of woe, scarcely could I summon strength or fortitude to approach the ruin—scarcely could I bear to look upon the wreck of former joys. With faltering steps I at length drew near—at length I stood within the falling walls. Sad recollections thronged my breast, and checked my utterance; whilst sorrow, too grave for words, oppressed my heart, and seemed to impede the stream of life. I stood in silent agony, breathing my anguish in convulsive sobs, till suffering nature sought relief in tears. The walls, responsive to my sighs, echoed back the cry of grief; and maddening fancy heard in the sound Helena's voice. “ Helena, dearest Helena, where art thou?” I ex-

claimed distractedly ; then paused and listened in torturing suspense, immoveable and afraid to breathe ; but all was silent as the grave. “ Helena, beloved Helena, oh ! speak to me,” I cried again, in the piercing accents of despair. Again I paused—again I listened breathlessly—fancying her voice in every gust of wind that whistled through the shattered edifice, till the falling of some smoking fragment dispelled the vain deception.

Overcome with hopeless misery, I sank exhausted amongst the ruins, and, lost in bitter recollection, lay extended on the ground regardless of existence ; when suddenly an ill-suppressed groan broke the dread stillness that reigned around. Starting abruptly, I beheld the haggard form of Leontovich bending over me, with woe and deep commiseration in his aspect. “ Where, where is Helena ?” wildly, I exclaimed ; “ Where is my wife ?”—“ The Countess is in safety.” A load of misery was lifted from my heart, and I ejaculated in thankfulness, “ Blessed be Heaven for its mercy ! But where is Count Zabloffka ?” Tears stole down the hollow cheek of Leontovich, whilst in a voice quivering with anguish he replied, “ Alas ! that I should be the messenger of sorrows which must rend my poor master’s heart !

that it should be my unhappy lot to tell him of his father's death!"—"Speak, speak Leontovich," I continued, "tell me every horror; hide nothing from me, but let me know the worst at once, or suspense will drive me to distraction." Happy should I be," he resumed, "could my words give peace or comfort to my dear master's mind. But no—it is my wretched fate to be the bearer of a tale that will increase his grief.

"That fatal day which took you from us was the last of happiness or pleasure in the castle of Zabloffka. No sooner were you gone than a constant dread alarmed my lady's mind, and broke her peace. She seemed to foresee the evils which have fallen upon us; and, abandoning herself to sorrow, rejected every consoling thought. Nor was the mind of the old Count less tortured than his daughter's; though, disciplined by the sufferings of former years, he had learned to control the feelings he could not subdue. It was not, indeed, without sufficient reason that they yielded to anxiety, for each succeeding day brought fresh cause for fearful anticipation or fruitless regret. Every hour teemed with some frightful report, or some untoward event. The flourishing accounts of the strength of the confederate forces were, shortly after your departure, discovered to be

exaggerated and untrue ; and messenger after messenger was sent to call you back. But no messenger returned to give us tidings of your approach ; and our fears, on your account, were augmented by the uncertainty in which this want of information left us as to your fate. We dreaded lest the little band you commanded might have been cut off by a superior force ; for, deceived by conflicting rumours, we could not ascertain the position either of the confederates or the enemy. But we had learnt enough to confirm the reports both of the enemy's overpowering strength, and of Razumoff being appointed their commander. This latter intelligence added to our disquietude, as it left us without a hope, should the confederates be beaten.

“ Under all these distressing circumstances the magnanimity of the Count Zabloffka was so conspicuous, that many of his household, who, in the every-day duties of common life had been lukewarm or careless, now, stimulated by his example, exerted an unusual activity in his service. Indeed their courage was the only prop then left to his falling fortunes ; for his peasantry, intimidated by the approach of a body of the enemy, evaded his summons to join him in arms, forgetting the fidelity they owed their lord.

“ The critical and anxious position in which we were thus placed, was in a few days increased by the rumour of an action in which the confederates were said to have been defeated ; but, as it was only a rumour, we still buoyed our confidence on the possibility of its being untrue. This flattering expectation, however, was but of short continuance. It was soon destroyed by the arrival of old Vassilieff’s son ; whose fatal narrative crushed the last feeble hope that had hitherto kept despair at bay. The condition of the Countess then became truly pitiable. The knowledge that you were lying on the bed of sickness, perhaps of death, drove her to distraction. Her grief could not be consoled ; though the good Count, summoning all his fortitude to his support, and wearing in his looks an air of composure which was foreign to his mind, endeavoured to inspire her with better hopes. Nor had he less self-command when striving, both by words and example, to cheer his men, and recall them from the confusion into which despair had thrown them. Unhappily, both his words and example were equally ineffectual. Conscious that their weakened force, and the old walls of the castle, built almost as much for show as strength, could offer but little resistance to a victorious enemy, they gave themselves up for lost ; and,

abandoning their several posts, wandered panic-struck through the castle, fearfully waiting the event.

“ The remaining hours of day passed slowly by in dread anticipation ; but, as the night advanced, and the torpor of exhaustion succeeded to over-excitement, the confused din of voices, mingling complaint with lamentations, began to subside. Little was then heard through the castle except the boisterous howling of a terrific storm, which blew between the battlements and turrets with a hideous noise, and shook the very walls to their foundations. Peal followed peal of thunder, rolling along in one ceaseless roar ; and the vivid flashes of lightning darted their forked streams each moment through the casements. Nothing that could add terror to a storm was wanting—Heaven seemed to shake its thunders over us, and point its lightnings at our heads in wrath. The increasing fury of the tempest palsied the hearts of many with superstitious dread ; it appeared like an awful warning of our fate. I thought no appalling circumstance could be added to the terrors of our situation ; the elements raging in all their fury without—within, our hearts depressed, our spirits broken. Alas ! I knew not half the horrors that environed us, till a discordant shout, rising above the frightful howling of the tempest, broke on our

ears—a mingled cry of fear and exultation. The enemy had attacked the castle—they were already within its walls, spreading death and devastation on every side. The timid fled before them, and fell unresisting, or imploring mercy; whilst those who still retained their self-possession, gathering round the Count, he led them forwards, and rushed with desperation upon the assailants. This vigorous onset gained a momentary advantage; but, fresh men pouring in upon us from every quarter, we were in our turn repulsed. The conflict then became more fierce and sanguinary; yet the courage of our brave little band could avail only for a moment to arrest the fatal course of our opponents. Borne down by numbers, pierced with wounds, the poor old Count fell bleeding and breathless; and the mangled bodies of his men were quickly heaped around him. The enemy, cruel by nature and maddened by success, being now delivered from the fear of further resistance, scattered themselves through the castle to plunder and destroy. Flames and thick clouds of smoke—the fall of blazing timber—the crash of sinking walls, soon showed their success; and in a few short hours the venerable pile, within whose gates so lately dwelt both happiness and peace, was rendered a heap of ruins.

“ At the beginning of the last onset I had fallen, wounded and stunned, at the feet of my master, and was soon covered from the sword of the enemy by the bodies of my dead or dying comrades. I lay there insensible till after the din of fighting had ceased ; when, gathering strength from necessity, I crawled from beneath their oppressive weight. The scene of horror which presented itself to my recovered senses would baffle all description. Finding myself—the only one left of so many—standing in a pool of my comrades’ blood, whilst their dying groans mingled with the wild outcries of their savage conquerors, I was so much overcome that I nearly sank again to insensibility. But the recollection of my dear mistress roused me to energy ; the hope that I might be the humble means of rescuing her from this scene of death, gave me strength ; and, breaking through the barrier of opposing flames, I hurried towards her apartments. They had been already ransacked, their furniture destroyed, and the flames were even then gaining upon the corridor which led to them. My heart sickened, and my brain grew dizzy at the sight. Our misery, I thought, was consummated ; and my unhappy mistress numbered with the dead. Frantic with grief, I ran wildly through the rooms, and called loudly on her name ;

when a feeble voice at length answered to my cry. I turned with instinctive eagerness towards the door whence the sound proceeded. It was the chapel door; and, entering it, I found my dear lady kneeling in fervent prayer at the altar, with the faithful Verinka prostrate at her side.

“ At the sound of my voice, imploring her to rise and fly from death, she turned. Her face was no longer bathed in tears—sigh or lamentation escaped not from her lips—but, strengthened by her prayers, she bowed to the will of Heaven, and submitted to its heaviest decrees without complaint. ‘ Rise, rise, my dear lady,’ I exclaimed, ‘ rise and fly; hasten from this scene of desolation; no moment is to be lost, the flames are gathering round us, and the murderous bands of Razumoff are hunting for your life.’ ‘ And my father?’ she eagerly demanded. Tears were my only answer. ‘ Now, then,’ she said, ‘ now I know the worst—Heaven’s will be done!’ After a pause, as if to compose the feverish workings of her mind, she added, in a subdued voice, ‘ Lead on, Leontovich, take me from this dreadful place, and you, Verinka, support me as I go, for my strength is failing.’ With much difficulty we made our way, through the suffocating smoke and over scorching fragments of half-burned furniture, towards the stable-yard,

which happily we reached unobserved by any of the straggling plunderers.

“ By a chance, which we thought directed by Providence itself in our emergency, a part of the stables had escaped the flames, and had not yet been pillaged. In an instant I fastened some horses to a povoska,* in which I placed the Countess and Verinka, and the next instant saw me driving furiously through the portal. In our progress we passed some of the enemy. The glare of the fire betrayed us to them, but astonishment arrested their hands till we were beyond the reach of their shot. Their astonishment, however, was but momentary, and lighted by the flames, they quickly followed close on our track. Driven almost to distraction by their shouts, I urged the horses to their utmost speed. A dense forest was not far off; to reach it was our only hope. The horses, impelled by voice and whip to strain every nerve, flew over the ground with the rapidity of thought, and baffling all the efforts of our pursuers to overtake us, dashed into the thickest part of the wood;—‘ Thank God,’ I exclaimed, ‘ we are in safety!’ The Countess, who during the flight had continued silent, threw herself on the neck of Verinka, and burst into tears. The feeling of the

* A light carriage used by peasants.

utter destitution to which she was so suddenly reduced from the very perfection of earthly happiness, entirely overcame her fortitude, and she yielded to the abandonment of grief. Tears and convulsive sobs told the anguish of her soul, whilst weeping on the bosom of her servant, she implored Heaven, in pity to her woe, to send her death, the last sad refuge of the destitute and wretched.

“ Almost breathless with agitation, and listening with expanded ears to catch every distant sound, I cautiously guided the horses through the mazes of the forest. Its most intricate paths were quite familiar to me, for I had spent my boyish years and grown to manhood in its deepest shades, where my poor widowed mother had long dwelt in a solitary cottage. Towards her lowly roof, I now bent my course, sure of finding there a ready welcome for my unhappy mistress, and a shelter from the outrages of the world.

“ The sun had already begun to shed its light through the leaves, and the howling of the night tempest had long ceased, ere we reached my mother’s humble door. Roused by my call, her venerable form soon came forth, and immediately perceiving the suffering condition of the Countess, she hastened, with respectful eagerness, to assist Verinka in supporting her into the cottage.

‘Happy am I,’ said she, ‘that my lonely hut should afford a resting-place for my honoured lady, and oh! more than happy that my son has been the means of saving her from destruction.’ ‘Alas, my good mother,’ replied the Countess, ‘I come a wretched, broken-hearted fugitive, whose only resting-place will be the grave.’ Exhausted as she was by the suffering and tumult of the last few hours, we easily persuaded her to endeavour to seek refreshment in sleep; and such a bed as so poor a hovel could provide was quickly prepared, on which she gladly laid her aching head, when, weary in mind and worn out in body, her sighs gradually died away in the deep breathings of a heavy slumber. We saw in it a happy omen, and watched over her with the anxious hope that sleep might in some measure compose the agitation of her spirits; nor was this hope misplaced, for, after a few hours’ rest, she awoke calm, and resigned to the will of Heaven. Her weakness and exhaustion still forbade her to rise from the bed, though Verinka and my mother promised themselves, now that her mind had regained its tone, soon to restore her to strength by kind and careful nursing.

“At the return of nightfall I hastened back to the scene of our misfortune, for I hoped I might

find amidst the ruins some trifles which might have escaped the search of the destroyers, and which might, perhaps, be useful to the Countess in her seclusion. This was one of the objects I had in view in returning to retrace the path of danger, before, perhaps, the ruffians who had followed our flight might have ceased from endeavouring to track us to our retreat, or might have retired with their spoil from the scene of desolation they had made; but I had yet a more important duty to perform. The poor old Count Zabloffka lay there a mangled and an unburied corpse. To lay his honoured head in such a grave as the care of a devoted servant might make for him among the ruins, to bathe his ghastly wounds with the tears of fidelity, and breathe a prayer over his sad remains, were the chief objects that engrossed my mind and prompted my undertaking.

“ Leaving, then, all thoughts of my own safety for the performance of a sacred duty, I bent my course, under the veil of night, towards the spot where the castle of Zabloffka so lately stood. Near its still smoking walls, and by the flickering light of its yet unextinguished fire, I discovered the son of Vassilieff hovering, like the spirit of departed pride, round the cemetery of its former grandeur. Like myself, he had been stunned and

wounded in the conflict. Whilst fighting bravely at my side, he received in his breast a blow aimed at the Count, and fell fainting with loss of blood. After lying amongst the slain many hours, insensible, or too faint to move, he at length recovered sufficiently to be able to crawl through the horrors that surrounded him into the open plain. The pelting storm and cold air of night revived him thoroughly, and I now found him, though very weak from loss of blood, about attempting to regain his home. Before, however, he bade me adieu, he chose to assist me in the pious duty I had undertaken, and pay a last tribute of respect to the memory of the unhappy Count.

“ Guided by the uncertain light of the expiring flame, we groped our way through the pile of ruin to the spot where the last stand had been made. There, extended on the ground and surrounded by the mangled bodies of his men, we found the brave old Count’s disfigured corpse, still frowning defiance, and clenching his sabre with the grasp of death.

“ We knelt beside him a few moments in silent prayer, whilst our tears fell unbidden on his wounds. Feelings of gratitude and deep regret drew from us bitter sighs, as, bending over him, we yielded to the violence of our grief. Quite unmanned, hardly could we summon resolution to commence

our mournful task ; for so many contingent circumstances, darkness, desolation, the howling of the distant wolves, the whistling of the hollow wind through broken casements and ruined walls, the occasional flare of an expiring flame, or the crash of some falling turret, contributed so greatly to the horrors of the scene, that we felt an almost superstitious dread which fixed us to the spot. But the fear of being betrayed and defeated in our purpose by the return of day, urged us to be quick, and gave us force to bear in our arms the wretched remains of the brave and virtuous Count.

“ Bending under the weight of our dismal burden, we slowly crept towards the chapel, in which the ashes of his ancestors had, till that fatal hour, reposed in peace. There we designed to lay also our unhappy lord. With bursting hearts and tearful eyes, we commenced the mournful labour of digging his shallow grave ; whilst the moon, stealing from beneath a cloud, lit us to our melancholy work. Having accomplished it, we covered with a soldier’s mantle his honoured form, and laid him in the earth, which, as we heaped it over him, fell heavily on his breast, and the tears of his faithful servants flowed in torrents at the sound. Long after the last clod of earth had fallen upon him, and the stones of the chapel

pavement, replaced in their former state, left no traces of his burial-place, we still lingered near the spot, and with our sighs and lamentations closed his funereal rites ; then turning from the grave with reluctant steps, and traversing again the devastated aisles and ruined galleries, we sought the open air, there to bid each other a last farewell.

“ The grey tints of morning were diffused over the horizon before I could regain the cottage, and I found all its inmates, except the Countess, already risen from their sleepless pillows ; anxiety on my account had kept them waking, but when they learned the object of my journey, they felt a grateful pleasure in its success. The Countess, by her gracious acknowledgments and approbation, rewarded me a thousand fold for every pain and every danger. ‘ Oh, Leontovich !’ she said, in a voice of commendation, ‘ no longer my servant, but my deliverer, my friend, the spirit of my murdered parent shall now rest in peace, and the blessing of his orphan child shall be your recompense.’

“ Since that last melancholy event I have frequently revisited Zabloffka’s grave, led by the hope of meeting my master, that I might guide him in safety to the dear embraces of his wife.”

Thus ended the mournful narrative of Leontovich. I had listened to him with eager impatience; and every varied feeling, from hope to dark despair. I now found my fearful forebodings but too fatally confirmed. Friends, fortune, fame, were all lost to me. A proscribed and suffering man, I was left without a country and without a home. But what was the world to me, its obloquy and persecution? Amidst all its miseries I still retained the consolation of an approving conscience; and, from the wreck of every other joy, Helena, my blessed Helena, was rescued to my fondest hopes. Her heavenly smile would still calm my anguish, her gentle voice still sooth my grief. Poverty and exile with her would cease to be evils, for her affection would be a balm to every pain, her example a support in every suffering. In heartfelt gratitude for the safety of my beloved wife, all my fears were lost, every grief forgotten, and I flew towards the cottage that contained my soul's treasure, on the wings of fond anticipation and sincere delight. Trembling with the eagerness of hope and promised joy, I raised the latch and entered. How my heart leapt in grateful rapture when I beheld again her lovely form. I rushed towards the couch on which she lay—pressed her to my heart with tender passion. Her eye spoke

transport, her quivering lip betokened gladness—she raised her head from the pillow, bent forwards to my extended arms, uttered a feeble cry, and sank lifeless on my breast! Father of mercies! mysterious, inscrutable are thy ways; pity and forgive thy servant, nor let the crying of a broken spirit be recorded against him, if, in the hour of anguish, he raised his voice against thy decree.

The recollection of that moment of severest sorrow even now unmans me, and with pain do I suppress the voice of lamentation. In vain have I called fortitude and resignation to my aid; tears still flow, sighs still burst in agony from my breast; in vain have I sought to repose my sorrows in the arms of death—death still shuns me, and time, the destroyer of all lesser woe, wears still deeper in my mind the impression of misery. Oh, Helena! blessed shade! look with pity on my anguish, and whisper peace and consolation to my distracted mind;—tell me that the woes of this life are transitory, and that, in happier regions, our spirits shall mingle in lasting bliss; tell me that, in realms where sorrow is unknown, we shall meet in endless joy and ever-during peace; and oh! teach me, by the memory of thy bright example, to bear with resignation my unhappy fate.

Lost in unutterable grief I long stood silent and

motionless, clasping to my breast her lifeless form. For a few short moments hope persuaded me that her sense might be restored, and I watched in breathless suspense for some sign of returning animation. Alas! in vain; the fragile bond of life had burst asunder, and her spirit had flown for ever. Though the sad reality at length pierced my soul, and hope and peace and comfort vanished for ever from my sight, I uttered no groan, I shed no tear; mine was a sorrow too deep for utterance, a grief beyond the reach of tears.

From this state of despondency, bordering on madness, I was recalled to myself by other cares and other hopes. In my absence, Helena had become the mother of a daughter. Yes, Ekatharina, blest image of your mother, it was your infant smile which, in that hour of affliction, rescued my soul from madness—it was your feeble cry of helplessness and innocence which arrested the hand raised for self-destruction, and bound me to existence.

I can now look back with more composure to those hours of misery. Ekatharina, no longer a helpless infant, has grown in every virtue, every endearing charm, that adorned her mother; and by her matchless affection has soothed the vehemence of my grief, softened it down to sober

melancholy, and made me again, for her sake, almost fond of life.

Thus I had seen the livid hand of death press to the grave her whom my soul treasured beyond all earthly happiness ; I had seen the dreary tomb close on her faded form ; I had borne to a peasant's sepulture this last of a noble line ; and now, proscribed and wretched, I ate the bread of poverty, with which the charity of a friendless widow and her orphan son supplied me. I thought the bitter cup of sorrow was o'erflowing. Alas ! it was not yet filled up ; for I still had the shelter of the widow's cottage, the security of her lonely dwelling, and it yet remained for me to be again driven a fugitive from the face of man, without shelter, without resource.

CHAPTER IV.

ON that unhappy day on which I followed to the grave the remains of my lost Helena, some of the spies of Razumoff had seen and recognized me under the disguise of a peasant's dress, in which I had hoped to weep unnoticed on my Helena's grave. They watched me to my retreat, and were not backward in betraying me to their master; who, to prevent the possibility of resistance or escape, immediately sent a band of armed men, with orders to surround the cottage in the night, and bring away all its tenants.

Leontovich, who was constantly on the alert to collect intelligence, by frequenting the neighbouring villages in various disguises, had learned the approach of these men, and immediately suspecting their destination, he made inquiries, which confirmed his fears; when he instantly hastened back to the cottage with the utmost speed. Breathless and eager he rushed into the room, his looks, his manner showing his alarm. "The assassins of Razumoff are close upon us," he exclaimed; "I

have obtained but a few moments' start of them ; we must once more fly for shelter to the woods." Whilst speaking he hastened to collect our arms ; and, without interrupting his preparations for our flight, continued to his mother, " Dearest mother, adieu ! may Heaven guard you ! your age and poverty will be safe from violence ; I must leave you ; I must live and die with my master ; adieu, mother, adieu ; if I live through this danger, I will soon see you again." His fidelity and courage were grateful to me ; but the thoughts of my poor infant distressed me beyond expression. The faithful Verinka perceiving it, eagerly said, " I loved my mistress better than life ; I would have died to serve her, and shall I forsake her orphan child ?—oh, never ! Whatever may be your fate, I will go with you for her sake, and Heaven grant that my care may be the means of saving the little innocent from some of the sufferings that threaten her." The safety of my child being my only care and wish, I rejoiced at the result of Verinka's devotion to the memory of my unhappy wife, though aware that she would probably prove an incumbrance on our flight. Without the loss of an instant to debate the subject, but acting upon the impulse of the moment, I assented to her proposal. The few things of first necessity we could

carry with us, food, clothing, and arms, were collected together with the utmost rapidity. Our sabres were girt on, our pistols loaded, Verinka enveloped in her cloak, Ekatharina wrapped in my mantle and suspended at my shoulder; the good old widow, too, commended to Providence all in fewer seconds than it has taken me to narrate; and the next moment saw us buried in the deep obscurity of the wood, with no refuge but in the darkness which surrounded us, no hope of safety but from Heaven.

In the hurry of our arrangements for escape we had no time to think of any thing else; every energy was occupied in providing for our immediate safety; but now that the tumult of our spirits had a little subsided, in consequence of our being placed at a greater distance from the danger which most alarmed us, all the terrors of our situation presented themselves frightfully to our minds. To me particularly the prospect was drear and desolate; darkened by wretchedness and perils from which there seemed no escape. I looked in vain for some ray of hope to guide my course; no hope was left; the world had turned against me, and I was hunted as a savage beast from lair to lair. I could hear the yells of my pursuers, their imprecations and cries of disappointment that I

had escaped them. I could see the fires they kindled to light their search, whilst, lurking beneath the branches of some broad tree in the midst of underwood and brambles, I clasped my infant to my breast with breathless solicitude. For my own life I little cared, it was become a burden grievous to bear, and I would willingly have rushed upon my enemies and died sword in hand; but my poor daughter, how could I bear to forsake her? how could I bear to abandon her to the fury of merciless assassins? A regard for her safety restrained the impulse of despair, which would have driven me to end my miseries and my life together. For her sake I still endeavoured to preserve life, though life was all that remained to me on earth.

In thoughts such as these, and in such dangers, the night passed heavily by, nor did the return of morning bring any respite to our suffering; for the voice of pursuit continued throughout the day, and to avoid it, we were compelled to steal from bush to bush, or bury ourselves beneath the fern and rushes.

During this long and anxious interval we were frequently in the most imminent peril of being tracked to our hiding place; we could sometimes hear our pursuers nearly close upon us, and some-

times we could almost distinguish their figures through the briars. On these occasions, creeping under thorns and brushwood, we lay close to the ground, motionless, and almost breathless, drawing our cloaks carefully over us that we might, as much as possible, appear to blend with the heather in which we lay; then, as the sounds receded from us, we again ventured out, to steal to some darker and more distant covert. Poor little Ekatharina seemed, from a natural impulse, to know our danger, for she uttered no infant cries, which would have betrayed us; but, nestling in my bosom, remained there so still and quiet, that we could almost fancy her asleep.

The evening, however, closed more favourably for us, as with the approach of night the eagerness of those who were in chase of us gradually died away; till their voices were no longer heard, nor the light of their fires or torches seen flickering between the trees. Silence and darkness revived our hopes; our enemies, weary and disheartened, had ceased from their search, and we might now escape. No moment of the propitious darkness was to be wasted, lest the return of morning should betray us to any stragglers who might be still lurking near the wood. We had scarcely broken bread during the last day and night; our

minds, equally with our bodies, were weary and harassed, sinking from exertion almost beyond our powers, and longing for refreshment and repose; nevertheless, the urgent necessity for despatch roused every drooping faculty, and compelled us to renew our efforts. Throwing off, then, all expectation of rest till we should have gained some more safe concealment, we recommenced the painful labour of penetrating the mazes of the forest, hoping to reach its farthest extremity before the return of day. A dark and stormy night seconded our efforts, by obscuring the approach of dawn; and the return of light happily found us on the opposite verge of the forest, in a situation where we could, without fear, stay to rest our weary limbs. Thankful for our escape, we threw ourselves upon the bare earth; and, pillowing our heads upon its dewy lap, sunk into sleep. It was the first moment of repose, the first taste of fearless rest we had enjoyed since the fatal hour in which we had been driven from the cottage.

This short sleep was a cordial to my troubled mind. I awoke refreshed, and was then first able to consider, with collected thoughts, the only course which was left me to pursue. A proscribed and ruined man, I had no longer a country or a

home. Friends had forsaken me, relatives I had none. Every hope, every joy, lay deep buried in the grave, and nothing now remained to bind me to a country which had cast me from it impoverished, proscribed, and destitute. To return, or linger where I then was, I neither wished nor dared. In either case a cruel death would have been the doom, not only of myself, but of my poor infant and faithful servants. Beset as I was by dangers and complicated ills, driven an outcast from my native land, I saw no other hope of safety, no other refuge for my misery, but such as might be derived from an association with the Zaporogian Cossacks. Their Setchka* was within a few days journey of us ; and, like ancient Rome, was opened as an asylum to any strangers who might seek its protection ; but with the annexed condition, that they should become adopted members of the Cossack body. It was a sad alternative to associate myself with such lawless freebooters ; but, circumstanced as I then was, no other resource remained ; and necessity compelled me to a course altogether repugnant to my feelings.

Verinka and Leontovich had attached themselves

* The Setchka is a fortified camp.

too firmly to my fate to leave me, under any circumstances ; so devoted, indeed, was their affectionate adherence, that even the certainty of being obliged to bid adieu for ever to their native soil, could not induce them to abandon me. Courageous and noble-minded, they sacrificed every hope of comfort, that they might follow and serve an unhappy master in his affliction, who could reward them only with his praise and gratitude.

Confirmed in my design by their ready acquiescence, I did not hesitate in acting immediately on the plan proposed ; and we commenced our journey towards the Cossack district, that very hour.

Our squalid air and wretched appearance concealed us on the route from observation or remark ; and, by awakening the charity of the cottagers in those villages through which we passed, generally obtained for us a portion of their humble fare, and the shelter of their lowly roofs. Where this resource failed us, we were fain to rest our heads upon the bare earth, and appease our hunger with the scraps remaining from the charitable supply of the preceding day.

After having in this manner travelled on, melancholy and dejected, for many weary days, we at length approached the falls of the Dneiper ; and

were cheered by the distant prospect of the Setchka, which was to be the boundary of our toil.

As it may not be uninteresting to you to know something of the Zaparogian Cossacks, who were an extraordinary race of men, differing widely in their manners and customs from every other people in the world, and equally remarkable for their origin, their form of government, and the nature of their institutions, I will endeavour to give you a short account of them, though it must, for a few moments, interrupt my narrative. They were derived from the Malo-Russian Cossacks, or Cossacks of the Ukraine; who had long been in the habit of keeping a moveable camp on the banks of the Dneiper, to guard their frontiers from the incursions of their troublesome and war-like neighbours. For that service of danger young unmarried men were always chosen; who, being free from every domestic tie and encumbrance, were therefore supposed to be best adapted for so active and perilous a life. And this supposition was but too well founded. The licentious freedom of the camp accorded entirely with their bold habits and untutored passions; the constant presence of danger roused all their energies, and kept their minds in active play; and, in short, in that school

of unrestrained daring, they soon learned altogether to despise the peaceful occupations of the husbandman. The idea of laying aside their arms and resuming the peasant dress, of quitting their fearless habits for the dull security of domestic life, became insupportable to them. They looked with dread to the change which would curb their roving spirit, and bind them down to the drudgery of daily labour. In disgust or contempt of such a change, they longed to free themselves from the restraint they could now no more endure; and there were not wanting among them fiery spirits to urge them to it, by persuading them that their interest, equally with their inclination, pointed towards independence.

The spirit of discontent, inflamed by such sentiments, soon blazed out in open violence. Subjection to the laws of their country, and reverence for their parents, were duties which these young Cossacks then totally disregarded. They threw from them all restraint, and, breaking into avowed revolt, proclaimed their determination to free themselves by the sword from any dependence on their native land. Inured to arms and delighting in danger, they were but too capable of maintaining by force their bold pretensions, and of repelling the unwilling efforts of their countrymen to

oblige them to return to obedience and submission. The result of a contest in which the parties opposed to each other were so unequally matched, and who were actuated by such different motives, could not be doubtful ; and, after a short struggle, it terminated in favour of the Zaporogians, which was the name these Cossacks then assumed.

Emboldened by their first success, they speedily formed new plans for aggrandizement ; and, no longer satisfied with being merely liberated from the yoke of subjection, they began to contrive schemes for future conquest, and calculate their means of carrying them into effect. The slightest consideration demonstrated that their limited numbers would be totally inadequate to accomplish any great enterprize ; and they had no hope of being able to augment their strength by any ordinary means. To surmount the impediment which this difficulty opposed to their ambitious prospects, they adopted a method at once novel and extraordinary ; a method without a single parallel in modern times. Having fortified their camp on the Falls of the Dneiper, they opened it, in imitation of ancient Rome, as an asylum for all who sought its protection. They decreed that all men should be received there without enquiry or hesitation, and enjoy immediately every established

right and privilege without distinction of country, or language, or religion.

So singular an institution could not fail of being speedily noted. In a short time it became the resort of the unhappy and unfortunate, of the worthless and abandoned, of the exiled and outlawed, from every part of Europe. Not unfrequently, however, amidst the mass of daring vice which was thus accumulated in the Cossack Setchka, some great and noble spirit might be found seeking there a refuge from the injustice of the world, or sternly combating with its oppression. And not unfrequently some exiled leader of political intrigues here hid his disappointment, or sought the Setchka as a convenient focus for new cabals. Here, too, grief and misery sent many wanderers to deaden the pang of anguish, or stifle the groans of remorse, in the tumult of a boisterous life.

It was a society composed of heterogeneous and discordant principles, which, to make them unite and blend, required the severest enactments and the most impartial distribution of the laws. Their decrees were traced by the hand of terror; but, as all strangers on associating themselves with these Cossacks were made perfectly acquainted with the nature of their institutions, and as every

violation of their ordinances was, in all cases, instantly followed by the appointed punishment, to which there could be no mitigation, and from which there was no appeal, the tranquillity of the Setchka was but rarely disturbed by any violent breach of discipline or obedience. Indeed, the interest of all was equally concerned to maintain the strictest observance of laws and institutions, of which each man had an equal chance of becoming, in turn, the chief administrator. This duty was vested in the office of Hetman; an office comprising both the principal military and civil authority in the state. It did not, however, confer on him the power of enacting laws, but only of enforcing their execution. Laws were enacted by general assemblies of the whole body of Zaporogian Cossacks, whilst the execution of them rested solely with the Hetman.

To prevent so great an authority from passing the bounds prescribed to it by the spirit of freedom and equality, which dictated all their proceedings; and, to debar it from the means of ever rendering itself permanent or oppressive, it was necessary to limit its duration to the short period of a year. At the expiration of that time the Hetman returned to his original station of simple Cossack, and another was elected in his stead.

The certainty of so soon returning to his humble rank, to mingle on equal terms with the men he had but lately governed, proved a strong check upon the imprudence or ambition of each individual Hetman, and made him careful to exercise his power with discretion.

There was one very remarkable custom attending the situation of Hetman. Though vested with so much authority, it was only whilst engaged in the duties of his office that any external marks of peculiar respect or distinction were paid him. On such occasions the Cossacks stood around him bare-headed, respectfully observant of his words and actions ; but, as soon as his duties were ended, these signs of distinction ceased, and he then mingled indiscriminately with his comrades until again called upon to exercise the functions of his office.

Whenever any military enterprise was undertaken, the Hetman assumed the chief command. This, indeed, was a part of his duty from which he was but rarely freed, for these turbulent Cossacks were almost constantly in a state of warfare with their neighbours. The avowed objects of their union were war and plunder. To ensure success to these objects all their institutions were directed, and these also were the chief

links which held their extraordinary society together.

As they did not cultivate the land, deeming the labours of the field a degradation to their military character, they were in fact compelled to plunder for subsistence; added to which, they esteemed it a glory to maintain their independence, and increase their strength in defiance of the efforts of the neighbouring countries to prevent it. War, therefore, became their only occupation, and plunder was their reward.

Another strong incentive urged them to constant hostility with the surrounding people, besides those already enumerated. It was the desire to possess themselves of women and children. Though the Setchka had become the refuge of desperate and daring characters from every part of Europe, their numbers did not increase quick enough to keep pace with the growing ambition of the Cossacks. This was an evil they thought could be remedied only by stealing the children of their hostile neighbours, and incorporating them in the Cossack body; which base expedient was no sooner proposed than unanimously adopted.

It might naturally be supposed that the children obtained by such means would make unwilling proselytes; but such was not really the

case. They generally soon familiarized themselves to their new course of life; and in too many instances, it seemed as if a little excitement from the glitter of arms or the tumult of war was sufficient to obliterate all the best affections of the heart. I have seen some of these boys, who were brought timid and weeping to the Setchka, become so deadened to every good feeling by a few weeks' familiarity with the licence and daring manners of their new comrades, as to become willing companions on a marauding expedition even to their native village.

With respect to their religious opinions, the original body of Zaparogian Cossacks professed themselves of the Greek Church; but they tolerated every religious persuasion, and never interfered with the creed or opinions of their adopted members.

Some of the particulars already detailed doubtless appear to you rather extraordinary, but the most remarkable feature of their institutions still remains to be enumerated. I allude to the custom of not allowing any women to reside in the Setchka. This singular custom arose from the peculiar circumstances of their original institution. Chosen, in the first instance, from among their comrades to form the detachment at the Falls,

principally because they were free from every domestic incumbrance, and therefore better adapted for the fearless roving occupation to which they were destined, they learned in the licence of the camp to consider wives and children as a restraint little suited to the life of a soldier. When, therefore, they achieved their independence, and established themselves as a separate body, considering that domestic cares were incompatible with freedom of action, they resolved still to maintain their original character, and continue, as far as might be, a society of bachelors. But as it was probable that some married men might, in the course of events, be associated with them, it was enacted that no woman should, under any circumstances, be suffered to reside in the Setchka ; and a distant village was appointed for the abode of the wives and families of such of their members as might chance to be married.

A regulation of this nature could not but be attended by many and serious evils. It answered, it is true, the purpose of rendering the men more careless of being attacked in their strong hold, having no one there for whose safety they could be alarmed ; and, at the same time, it prevented their being impeded in their movements by any fears for those they might leave behind. But it

rooted out from among them all moral feeling ; it destroyed all the best relationships of life, all the ties of home and kindred, those gentle bonds which render life a pleasure, society a blessing ; and it left them a prey to every fierce and savage passion. And to such men and such society my cruel destiny compelled me to fly for safety—forced me to seek a shelter with those whom my heart rejected and my soul despised ! Think how repugnant it must be to one of a generous mind to claim protection from those he cannot esteẽm—how great must be the sufferings which could drive him to such a course—and do not condemn me if, to preserve my child, I yielded to so galling an alternative.

It is worthy of remark that these same men who, in the leisure of the camp, were, for the most part, the grossest of all sensualists, spending every interval of repose in gluttony and drunkenness, became sober and vigilant soldiers the moment they were detached on any marauding expedition. It seemed as if the call to arms had power to change their nature, for no men could be so enduring or persevering, so patient of cold and hunger, fatigue and watching, as these when engaged in any warlike adventure ; though no sooner was their exploit accomplished, than they would again return to fresh excesses. But enough

of these people, their laws, their manners, their virtues, or their vices. If, as a body, they sinned against the law of nations and the dictates of humanity, they have paid the penalty of that fault—they have ceased to be a people. Their crimes as individuals must be individually accounted for; it is a reckoning which rests between God and their own consciences, and for which I dare not arraign them. I have been led on by the interest of the subject to enter into minute details which have too much interrupted the course of my narrative; but I will now return to it without further delay, and give you the remainder of my story.

CHAPTER V.

WE approached the Setchka fearlessly, reckoning with confidence on a ready admission; nor were we disappointed. Our wishes were no sooner known than acceded to, and we were welcomed as comrades and friends, even before we had gone through the regular forms used in admitting new members to their body. These forms were few and simple. They consisted merely in explaining, in presence of the Hetman and a certain number of Cossacks, the nature of their constitution, their laws and regulations, to which those desirous of becoming adopted Cossacks having sworn an entire submission and faithful adherence, they were clothed and armed in their peculiar manner, and declared to be admitted to a full participation of all the rights and privileges of the tribe.

When I found myself fully established, by this short ceremony, on the footing of other Cossacks, and free to claim a participation in all their rights, my first care was to place Ekatharina with Verinka in the village allotted to the women. There I found

a solitary cottage, where I doubted not they might live in retirement and peace, as it was distant from the more frequented part of the village, and not liable to intrusion from the other inhabitants. I chose this secluded spot, for I wished my child to be bred up in ignorance of the rude people by whom she was surrounded, and taught to fear all communication with them. By this precaution, with Verinka for her watchful nurse, I hoped, even in that bad neighbourhood, to screen her from the danger of encountering vicious characters, and to hide her from unworthy eyes. The event has justified my precaution and confirmed my hopes; she has become what you see her, gentle, affectionate, sincere, and pious, an emblem of all that is lovely or amiable in woman.

In instructing my daughter, in training her to emulate her mother's virtue, in watching the development of her mind, and guiding her understanding, I passed all the hours delightfully which were unemployed in the duties of my new character; and I felt the remembrance of my sorrows weakened by the contemplation of so much loveliness and so much virtue growing gradually under my eye. When the duties of my station required my absence, and called me to join or lead some military expedition, Leontovich, no longer my

servant, but my companion and worthy friend; partly supplied my place at the cottage in guarding it from the intrusion of unwelcome guests.

In cares such as these, and in such occupations, years rolled quickly by. My general good fortune and success in the various military exploits in which I had been engaged, gained me the confidence of my comrades in arms; whilst my moderation, uprightness, and courtesy won me their esteem. It was, I think, in the eighth year after I first joined the Cossacks that they evinced their approbation of my conduct, by electing me their Hetman. To such an honour I did not aspire; for it is a difficult and arduous undertaking to govern, even by established laws, so many thousand men, each watchful to discover something objectionable in the conduct of their chief, and, perhaps, some wishing, through jealousy or envy, to impede him in the free exercise of his authority. This difficulty, and every irksome circumstance attending the office, I was fully conscious of, and would willingly have shunned; but from their election it was not permitted to recede, and I entered on the duties of Hetman, if not willingly, at least with zeal.

I had not long been established in this post of

honourable eminence, when a man, clothed in the garb of misery, and haggard with wretchedness and long suffering, applied for admission to the Setchka. He was received freely, as all were who claimed our protection, and shortly afterwards, he was, in my presence, admitted, according to the appointed forms of adoption, a member of our tribe. Misery and suffering had so changed his looks, had so deeply furrowed his withered cheeks, that, in this squalid figure, I did not recognise the once proud and powerful Razumoff. Not so with him; he at once recognised me, and all the hatred which he had borne me in his prosperity revived, undiminished by years of absence or the pangs of wretchedness.

This change in his fortunes, from splendour to want, from power almost regal to the lowest state of misery, was effected, not by irreproachable and undeserved misfortune, but by the operation of the same wicked principle which had urged him to destroy Zabloffka and to ruin me. Hatred and revenge led him to attempt a crime, from the just punishment of which all his grandeur and all his art could not protect him.

Elated by the consciousness of his power, and trusting to the success which had generally crowned

his undertakings, he endeavoured, by all the tortuous arts of which he was master, to weaken the authority of the monarch he had assisted in placing on the throne, thinking that in the confusion which would ensue, he might render himself independent of the crown. In this instance his intrigues were unsuccessful; they were betrayed and counteracted, when, in rage and disappointment at his failure, he put a climax to his villainy by attempting the private assassination of the King. But now the demon which had borne him through so many acts of atrocity, abandoned him to his fate; his emissaries were discovered, and, on the rack, confessed that Razumoff was their employer.

A crime of this nature was beyond the reach of pardon; though Razumoff's power placed him above the fear of a public punishment, and made him despise the authority of the law. Under these circumstances the King pretended ignorance of the crime which had been attempted, and, by flattery and apparent confidence, lulled his adversary to security, till, in an unguarded moment, an opportunity was afforded of seizing and immuring him in a dungeon.

Such an arbitrary step as this could not be taken without creating a great sensation among the other nobles; but when made certain of Razumoff's crime

by convincing proofs, they could offer no representation in his favour.

Not yet, however, was his career quite ended ; he had still some dependants who remembered with regret the licence they enjoyed in the days of his prosperity, and whose endeavours were ceaseless to contrive the means of his escape. But before they could effect their purpose, many long months had passed away. At length, when hope had forsaken him, when his mind was depressed, his spirit broken, by the recollection of what he had been and the bitter feeling of what he then was, when his health was gone, and his body fast sinking to decay in the damp and noisome dungeon, the fidelity of his gaoler was corrupted, and his prison door unclosed for his escape.

Feeble and exhausted, he gained the open air ; but whither to bend his steps he knew not. In all his long course of prosperity he had made no friend on whom he could implicitly rely ; nor could he derive any support from his numerous vassals, as his estates were all confiscated, and occupied by the officers of the crown. Irresolute and undecided what course to pursue, he suddenly adopted the suggestion of the man through whose agency his escape had been effected, to hasten towards the district of the Zaparogian Cossacks.

He adopted this plan, not only with a view to his immediate safety, but also with the hope of future revenge ; for he thought that were he fortunate enough to reach the Setchka, he might probably be able to incite the Cossacks to extend their ravages even to the heart of Poland.

After a variety of dangers, escapes, and sufferings, he reached the Setchka in the condition I have described ; but his plans for future injury to his country were soon postponed for more immediate schemes of vengeance. On seeing me, his former successful rival, whom he believed to be utterly ruined, if not dead, now holding the place of highest trust and honour amongst the very people whose protection he, an exile and a beggar, was soliciting in his misery, all his old vindictive passions, his hatred and his jealousy, returned with accumulated force. His only breathings now, as formerly, were for my destruction, and all his thoughts were bent upon my ruin. He readily perceived that his altered looks had prevented me from recognising him, and, by still concealing himself from me, he hoped to accomplish his purpose unobserved.

All his arts were thenceforward employed to compass my destruction. Intrigue, cabal, misrepresentation, and falsehood, were used unspa-

ringly to change the confidence and good opinion of the Cossacks into suspicion and distrust. But these vindictive measures were employed in vain. Happily their opinion of my uprightness was founded on the experience of many years, and their confidence in me was not to be shaken by any insidious artifice Razumoff could invent.

Finding his insinuations and cabals all ineffectual to injure me, the demon of vengeance which directed his actions, prompted him to another and greater crime. His thirst for my blood was not yet sated, and in my blood he resolved to drown at once his fear and hatred; for the idea of assassination was one familiar to his mind. In the days of his prosperity he had frequently employed the assassin's hand to remove his rivals or opponents; and now that his wealth was gone, that he could no longer bribe another to perpetrate the crimes he planned, he did not hesitate to seize himself the midnight dagger.

The time he chose for the perpetration of this horrid deed was one in which the Setchka had been thrown into a state of alarm and confusion by the threatening of extraordinary danger; trusting, that in the disorder of the moment, he should escape detection. Exhausted by a day of anxious toil, I had thrown myself on my couch to seek an hour's

sleep. It was a refreshment that wearied nature absolutely required. But though my eyes were closed in slumber, my senses were still awake, for my mind was painfully occupied by the danger which menaced us. Whilst dozing thus unquietly, I was suddenly startled by the sound of a footstep in my chamber; I raised myself on my couch, and gazing round, was surprised to find the room to be in darkness, for a lamp had been left burning on the table. Certain that I had heard a footstep in the apartment, I stretched out my arm to discover if any one was near me. My extended hand encountered the face of a man standing close to the couch, but almost before I had touched him, I received a wound. Springing on my legs, I grappled with the assassin, and loudly called on Leontovich, who was sleeping in the adjoining chamber. Roused by my call, Leontovich hastened to my assistance, but scarcely had he reached the spot where I was struggling with the murderer, when he fell bleeding and lifeless at my feet. The villain Razumoff, eluding my grasp, had thrust a dagger in his heart. O, Leontovich, friend, companion in all my miseries, my more than brother, how sincerely have I bewailed thy death! Many will profess a friendship, but never shall I find another so faithful and self-devoted as thou wert,

nor shall I ever so lament, so bitterly lament, another's loss as thine.

The noise of our conflict had by this time alarmed several other Cossacks, who came rushing into the room armed with their sabres and pistols, some of them also bringing lights. In an instant the dagger was struck from Razumoff's hand, and he was laid prostrate on the ground. I now first recognised the accent of his voice in his cries for mercy, and with horror I pronounced his name. His answering glance told me I was not deceived, told me it was Razumoff, my mortal enemy, who lay a suppliant at my feet. Scarcely could I believe the evidence of my senses, so improbable did it appear that Razumoff should be so fallen; but when no longer able to doubt, when his coward supplications assured me it was indeed Razumoff, detestation and horror took full possession of my soul. I recoiled from his touch as from an adder's sting, and turned from his looks as from a basilisk.

But had I been inclined to listen to his prayers, had pity or contempt influenced me to spare him, it could have availed him nothing. The law was precise in cases of murder; it was a law which the Hetman had no power to change or mitigate, and Leontovich lay, a bleeding evidence of the crime.

I was not, however, so mercifully inclined ; for though I might, perhaps, have allowed my own wrongs to pass unrevenged, the murder of my friend closed all the avenues of mercy in my mind, and I rejoiced that the hour was near when Razumoff would suffer one of the most terrific punishments ever invented by the art of man.

The order for his removal being given, he was led away, shuddering, trembling, in dread anticipation of the awful fate which awaited him ; and early on the following morning every necessary arrangement was made for his trial. With the Zaparogians the form of trial for assassination was simple, and the law very exact. It ordained, that the crime being proved by competent witnesses before the Hetman and a council of Cossacks, the malefactor should, in their presence, and in the presence of the Cossacks generally assembled, be chained to the corpse of the murdered man, and buried alive in the same grave with it ;—that one grave should receive them both, the murderer and his victim. This sentence it was the duty of the Hetman to pronounce, and to see its execution ; nor had he it in his power to deviate in the slightest degree from the exact fulfilment of this dreadful law. Thus it became my painful, my appalling duty, to sit in judgment on Razumoff, on

the man who had driven me in wretchedness from my country, on the murderer of my wife, of her father, and of my friend, and who, in power and prosperity, had exulted in the misery he inflicted.

If revenge had been my passion, how fully would it have been satisfied in being thus made the instrument in the hands of Providence to bring my persecutor, the destroyer of my happiness, to an awful judgment; how highly would it have been gratified in witnessing his last struggle, in hearing his last stifled groan, as the earth was thrown on his unpitied head, or in adding to his tortures by the display of my triumph over him. But the idea of revenge did not enter my mind; it was a passion foreign to my soul. I took no pleasure in his sufferings, nor would I have added to them; and if the law would have allowed it, most willingly would I have avoided the terrible necessity of being present at his death.

Soon after the sun had risen, the elders of the Cossacks were assembled in council in an open space left for public meetings in the centre of the camp. Crowds of other Cossacks were standing round the square, bareheaded and silent. When I had taken my place in the midst of the council, Razumoff was brought before us under a strong guard; and opposite to him was placed the corpse

of Leontovich. In this situation he stood, pale, trembling, and sinking with terror at his fearful doom; for the proofs of his guilt were so flagrant, so convincing, that he could offer no palliation, nor hope for any mercy.

When, in a voice broken and subdued by the feelings which were working in my mind, I pronounced the awful sentence; when I said, "To the body of thy victim thou shalt be chained, and one grave shall receive both thee and it," a thrill of terror passed through the whole assembly, so appalling were the fatal words even to their hardened natures. But all remained silently observant of the event; no word was spoken, no sound was heard, except the groans and lamentations of Razumoff; who, tearing his hair, and throwing himself on the ground frantic with despair, appealed to me for mercy. "Oh, Dubroffski!" he exclaimed, "let the memory of the injuries I have done you be lost in my present suffering. Oh! save me, save me, from this dreadful death! Bury me not alive; my sins unatoned and unforgiven. Oh! give me time for repentance, for absolution, or you will kill my soul!" In entreaties such as these he passed the few short moments that were left to him, whilst the grave was digging which was to close on him and his crimes for ever. My

soul was torn and harrowed with anguish at the duty imposed upon me, at the necessity of remaining a silent spectator of his miserable end, a listener to his heart-rending cries for mercy.

The last spadeful of earth had been removed from the grave, the chain was already extended to bind him to the corpse, when, breaking from the guards and springing to the tribunal where I sat, he threw himself prostrate before me, and clasped my feet. Willingly, very willingly, did I at that moment forgive him every misery he had caused me, and most sincerely did I wish I could have liberated him; but I was powerless to save, and compelled to see him dragged away struggling to the place of execution. All I could do, was to pronounce my individual pardon. "Razumoff, I forgive you," were the last words of mine he ever heard; and, on hearing them, he cast on me a look which pierced me to the soul, and which is still before me.

The forgiveness I had pronounced checked for a moment his cries and struggles, during which short interval he was chained back to back to the corpse of Leontovich; when, being lowered into the grave, the executioners began to cover him with the earth. The first clod which fell upon

him recalled all his terrors, and made him renew his cries ; they continued to the last, though his voice grew fainter as the heap increased, till stifled groans alone were heard. My name, half pronounced, was the last word I could distinguish. I still seem to hear it ; his groans still vibrate in my ears, and his imploring looks are still present to my eyes. Thus perished Razumoff ; and if there is in this life an equal dispensation of retributive justice, surely it was the Power that directs it, which made him so perish before me, his former victim.

Prayers for the departed soul of Leontovich were pronounced over the grave by the priests ; but maledictions, curses, the denunciation of eternal torments, of Heaven's unsparing wrath towards the offending wretch, were poured on the name of Razumoff ; whilst the low murmuring responses of the people joining in the prayers and maledictions, rendered the whole too shockingly impressive to be witnessed unmoved even by the most careless or abandoned.

This dreadful ceremony was at length terminated. The priests had retired, the crowd had dispersed ; but I yet sat motionless, gazing on the spot, my thoughts so intently occupied with the tragic scene that I did not observe it to be closed,

till a signal to dismiss the council recalled me to myself.

Time has weakened, though not effaced, the painful impression these horrid circumstances have made upon my mind. In the silence of the night I often fancy I hear the groans of Razumoff, responsive to the curses which were heaped upon him ; and even in darkness his supplicating look, his agonized struggles, are sometimes distinctly present to my sight. But this illusion of the imagination, though distressing, has the happy effect of fixing deeply in my mind a grateful sense of the goodness of that Providence, which guided me through such suffering and danger.

I mentioned that Razumoff chose for the perpetration of his crime, a time when the Setchka was thrown into a state of alarm and confusion, by the appearance of extraordinary danger. I will endeavour to explain to you the nature of that danger, which, as it finally accomplished the destruction it had long been threatening to our institution, it may be interesting to you to know.

The incursions of the Zaparogians in all the surrounding districts had been conducted for several years with such destructive ferocity, that they were become an object of general hatred and terror ; whilst their strength, increasing in even a

greater degree than their rapacity, rendered them troublesome, if not formidable, even to the Russian government.

The Russians had latterly very much extended their conquests in the neighbourhood of the Dneiper, and northern coast of the Black Sea; and they were meditating an attack upon the Crimea, as well as the districts bordering on the Pruth. Under these circumstances it became an object of no small importance with them to secure the perfect submission of the Zaparogians; or, if that was impracticable, to conquer and disperse them. The government of Russia therefore listened eagerly to the complaints and representations which were continually made by those who suffered from their inroads, and sent commissioners to inquire into the extent of the devastations, as well as to learn thoroughly the exact state and nature of their institution.

The privilege of making this inquiry was claimed, on the plea of the Zaparogians having placed themselves under the protection of Russia. Unfortunately there were sufficient grounds for this pretext; for, with a view of rendering that government inattentive to the complaints so frequently urged against them, the Zaparogians had, not long before this period, nominally placed them-

selves under its protection, hoping by this precaution to be considered as on the same footing with the other Cossack tribes. Their hopes were disappointed, and their precaution turned against themselves. It was, nevertheless, thought advisable to receive the commissioners honourably, that there might be found no serious subject of quarrel; though it was feared their visit would bring us into difficulty.

Every artifice was used to deceive them as to our real force and resources, as well as the nature of our laws and customs; but when their penetration proved too acute to be eluded, endeavours were made to corrupt their fidelity, and tempt them from a faithful discharge of their duties. These efforts, however, were equally unavailing; and, notwithstanding all the obstacles thrown in their way, they arrived at an accurate knowledge of the real state of our affairs. Such a knowledge could only be fatal to us; and the report they made upon it to their government sealed our ruin as an independent people.

It has always been a principle of policy with us to conceal our real force; that, being supposed by the Russians to be a great deal weaker than we were in fact, we might not awaken their fears or jealousy. But now that our actual strength was

known, that the mischievous tendency of our laws and customs was completely developed, we could no longer hope to escape the most serious notice of so jealous a government, but must expect to feel the full weight of its power. We, consequently, were under considerable apprehension; for, though our force might be considered as very great when compared with other Cossack tribes, it would be as nothing if opposed to so vast an empire; and to strengthen ourselves by alliances was quite impossible, for, being dreaded as a scourge, our destruction was generally desired.

During this state of affairs I was chosen Hetman, and it became my anxious duty to endeavour to steer our little bark through the storm which was gathering round it. By promises and concessions, and a submissive assent to nearly every thing which was proposed on the part of the Russian government, I thought I had averted, at least for a time, the danger that was threatening us; but I had to deal with an enemy far more crafty than myself, and was deceived by negotiations instituted merely to temporize, whilst an army should be collected sufficiently numerous to awe us into entire subjection, or to overwhelm us at once.

The approach of this immense army awoke us

from the dream of safety in which we had been thrown by deceitful negotiations. All the peril of our situation was manifest to every one. We had no hope of being able to withstand so formidable a body, formed principally of infantry, with a long train of artillery, whilst the whole of our force consisted only of irregular cavalry.

I endeavoured to quell the alarm which the advance of these troops excited, by showing how ill adapted they would be to follow us in a rapid retreat; but, unhappily, terror and confusion so pervaded the minds of the Cossacks, that they could neither think nor reason with their usual coolness. The moments which should have been employed in active and decisive operations they lost; and thus allowed themselves to be environed by the enemy, before they had taken any measures for their defence.

With shame I come to the conclusion of my story; for I must feel shame in speaking of the timid weakness of a body of men who had so lately claimed the merit of possessing more than common energy of character. It was an energy which attended them only in prosperity, but forsook them altogether in the first moment of adverse fortune.

The Setchka being surrounded by the whole

force of the enemy, those who ought to have been its steady defenders were thrown into such alarm by the appearance of the heavy masses of infantry and artillery, that they were prepared to yield without a struggle, and submit to any terms. Nor was it long before the conditions on which peace would be granted were made known; and though they seemed hard to men accustomed to a life of unbounded license, they were much more lenient, much more favourable, than we had any right to expect. They were simply these,—“That we should either abandon the frontiers of Russia altogether, or submit to change our appellation; to be transferred to another district; to forsake our old habits; to assume the manners and mode of life common to the other Cossack tribes, and become tributary to Russia.” Should the latter propositions be acceded to, we were to be still left, to a certain degree, in possession of our independence; for the police and internal regulations of our settlement, whether they related to the administration of justice, the collecting of taxes, or the election of Hetman, and other officers, would not be interfered with. But it was insisted that we should no longer live by committing depredations on the lands of our neighbours, but become cultivators of the district allotted us.

This last article was one to which some of the most licentious and unruly of the Zapparogians would not submit; and, rather than forsake their old habits of pillage and become quiet cultivators of the land, they chose to desert their comrades and scatter themselves through other countries. The remainder submitted without a struggle to every proposition.

I could not but lament that so fine a body of men should have so tamely yielded to the impulse of terror; yet, as far as I was individually concerned, I most sincerely rejoiced at the result. It was the means of removing me from a turbulent and insecure existence, to one of comparative peace and tranquillity; of freeing me from a companionship with lawless men in acts of violence which I abhorred, and of placing me in a situation where I might again cultivate the domestic virtues, again enjoy domestic pleasures, if not in circumstances of perfect ease, at least far removed from want or fear.

Very little time was allowed for reflection or repentance after the above arrangement was concluded. We were almost immediately marched away in a body, from the Falls of the Dneiper to the North Eastern shore of the Black Sea, and the neighbourhood of the sea of Azoff; taking

with us our wives, our children, arms, horses, and all our moveable effects. The march was long and tedious, but we were finally established in our new settlement without further molestation, or remarkable adventure. From that time to this the settlement has remained undisturbed by any instance of violent interference on the part of the Russian government; and I believe very few of its inhabitants now regret the loss of their former habits, or have any wish to return to them, so completely are they changed by the more quiet, peaceful lives they have since been compelled to lead.

The happy alteration which has been effected by these circumstances in my condition, you may readily imagine; for in the long sojourn you have made with us, you have had ample opportunities of judging of the calm tranquillity I now enjoy. You have seen how my days glide peacefully on in simple occupations and easy labour; and oh! you have seen how the tender, watchful affection of my daughter sheds a blessing on all my hours. May Heaven ever preserve her in peace and happiness to be still the comfort, still the blessing of her father.

Dubroffski here ended his story. It interested

me so deeply that I have even now its minutest circumstances present to my recollection, as distinctly as though I had heard them but yesterday. I can even now fancy myself listening to his deep-impassioned tones, when dwelling on some affecting passages in his narrative; and can still see his expressive countenance marked by anguish, or beaming with pleasure, at the varying subject of his tale. His daughter, too, still in my memory seems to hang upon her father's words, as when pouring out her grief in tears at the history of her mother's death. But I will not longer dwell upon events so deeply tinged with sorrow—the recurrence to them is painful to my mind.

CHAPTER VI.

A SHORT time after Dubroffski had made me the depository of his sorrows, it became necessary for me to bid him an eternal adieu. The spring had rapidly advanced, and, in my still doubtful state of health, I could not again venture to postpone my journey; fearing to lose, by one of those changes so common in that uncertain climate, the facilities of travelling which the fine season then afforded. It was not without mutual regret, indeed on my part with unfeigned grief, that we parted. He had been to me every thing that the tenderest friend, the kindest brother could have been, under circumstances where nothing but tenderness and brotherly kindness could have saved me from inevitable death. I felt that to his care I was indebted for existence; that his hand had rescued me from an untimely grave in a land of strangers; and gratitude, equally with affection, bound me closely to him. And—why should I conceal it?—as the hour of separation drew near, a silent monitor in my breast warned me of other feelings

than those of gratitude towards the father, and showed me that my grief at the idea of parting flowed from a tenderer source than sympathy for his affliction. Yes, Ekatharina, your patient resignation, your filial piety, your gentle nature, won my admiration; and, with feelings of bitter sorrow I anticipated the hour which was to tear me from you. Many weary years have passed since that sad hour. I am now fast verging towards the grave, a solitary being with few to care for me, few whose feelings can sympathize with mine; yet the sense of loneliness which oppresses me is sometimes cheered by the recollection that there was once a heart which beat in unison with mine, a breast that shared my secret thoughts and wishes.

Regrets could not delay the moment appointed for my departure; it came, alas! too quickly for my peace, and I left thee, Ekatharina, left thee in sorrow; but never, to my latest hour, shall I forget thee, nor ever cease to cherish thy loved name.

Though circumstances compelled me to hasten my return to my native country, whence I had been absent many years, I was tempted, by the desire of making a short sea voyage for the re-establishment of my health, and of visiting Old Tcherkask, at that time the capital of the Don

Cossacks, to take rather a devious route. Having it in view to pass through Pultava on my journey home, I might have found a more direct way, had speed been my only object; but I had too much the spirit of a wanderer ever to pursue the shortest road. The purpose, indeed, which led me towards Pultava was of a painful nature, but one I was equally bound in friendship and in honour to accomplish; for the mother of the unhappy Colonel, whose death I have recorded, dwelt in that neighbourhood, and I felt it as a sacred duty to deliver to her the ring he had trusted with me in his last moments—to repeat to her his dying words.

Dubroffski had made many little arrangements for my comfort in travelling; and in order to save me from the weariness of a solitary journey, as well as to guard me from other inconveniences to which a stranger might have been exposed, he proposed accompanying me to Anapa, whence I intended to sail to Taganrogh in one of the small vessels that trade along the coast. I was too much delighted in having such a companion and such a protector to oppose his intention, or, perhaps, I hoped his presence might lessen the pang of parting eternally from her I loved best on earth.

At length the unwelcome hour arrived, when it was necessary to set forwards. The journey was to me, beyond description, melancholy ; nor could all the kindness of Dubroffski dispel its gloom. Every object served to recall the memory of the circumstances under which I had so lately traversed a part of the same country—of that dear friend whose life was so miserably lost ; and every recollection increased my mournful feelings. Were it not indeed for the sad reflections which would thus ever crowd upon my mind, I could not but have taken a pleasing interest in the wild features of the country through which we passed ; where the roads sometimes descended almost to the bed of torrents that foamed among loose fragments of rock, sometimes climbed over precipices so steep as, at a little distance, to appear accessible only to the mountain goat ; and where villages, equally romantic, were for the most part hidden in deep glens, beneath the shadow of huge trees hardly less ancient than the rocks in whose crevices they grew.

After having continued our course for three days through that region of uncultivated beauty, we reached the summit of a mountain, whence we beheld the whole face of the country bright in the morning sun. At a short distance below us, a

village seemed to hang carelessly on the mountain side, where the cottages, being partly formed of excavations in the rocky surface of the mountain, so as to present only a front with a small portion of side walls to the spectator, appeared, by some strange means, to adhere to the smooth declivity; whilst their low, flat roofs, jutting a little beyond the steep slope of the hill against which they rested, looked rather like terraces than the roofs of habitable dwellings. Many of these singular terraces were now almost covered with wheatsheaves, which some of the village women were employed in spreading abroad, whilst others occupied themselves in treading out the corn; but the men, who take little share in these labours, sat smoking in idle groups at the cottage doors. The declivity on which the village hung almost appeared to have been the work of art; the mountain in every other part being quite precipitous and rugged, till it terminated in a bold promontory whose base was washed by the sea.

As I looked with admiration at the landscape, there was one bright spot in the horizon which caught my attention, and on which I intently gazed, until I at length perceived it to be occasioned by the reflection of the sun from the whitened houses of a small town situated close

upon the border of the sea, just where a branch of the rocks, stretching round, formed a secure and sheltered bay; and where, also, I fancied I could distinguish the masts of two or three vessels riding at anchor. Thither we bent our way with heavy hearts, for there we were to bid each other a last farewell. But enough of this painful subject—it is a mournful task to recur to those moments of sorrow, moments which had better be thought of only as a long-ended dream—suffice it to add that, arrived at the coast, I found the vessel on board which I expected to sail, already under weigh. Hastening to the boat prepared to take me out to it, I for the last time pressed Dubroffski's hand, for the last time bade God bless him, and, a few minutes afterwards, was safely on the deck of a Donskoi polacre, sailing with a fair breeze from the shore I had learned to love almost as dearly as my native land.

The little vessel, borne along by a favouring gale, cut its way rapidly through the waves, and we had every prospect of a quick and prosperous voyage; but shortly after we had passed the Straits of Jenicalé, the wind began to blow with a violence that increased till it at last grew to a dreadful tempest. Storms in the Sea of Azoff are frequently fierce and sudden, and the one with

which we then had to contend was terrific in the extreme. Loud peals of thunder and flashes of vivid lightning roused the waves to put forth all their terrors, till they seemed, by their horrid roar, to dash back defiance to the clouds ; whilst the sudden and impetuous gusts of wind, as they howled frightfully through the shrouds and rigging, drove on the polacre with such abrupt and furious shocks as to render it scarcely manageable. The storm continued to rage in this manner during the whole night ; but though destruction, in its most appalling form, was menacing us on every side, and each successive blast seemed charged with death, the seamen still retained their confidence undiminished. At length, when the tempest seemed to have reached its greatest height, a tremendous sea, suddenly breaking over the vessel, in an instant carried away her mast and rudder, and swept every thing from her deck. Left thus like a log upon the water, strained and shattered more and more at each fresh concussion, she soon began to open at the seams, and appeared to be quickly sinking. Our situation was now become truly desperate ; the only chance of safety rested on the possibility of our being able to keep the wreck afloat for a few more hours, until the hurricane should have so far abated as to allow us to

take to the boat without the certainty of being instantly swallowed by the waves ; but though our hopes were almost gone, no one of the crew shrunk from his allotted duty, all toiled incessantly at the pumps. Happily, as the morning began to dawn, our perseverance was repaid by seeing the sun once more rise upon us bright and clear. A few thin clouds driven rapidly across the horizon, and the rolling of the billows, which still continued to heave from the impulse they had before received, were then the only remains of the subsiding tempest. Still, however, our condition was far from enviable, for, notwithstanding all our exertions, the water had by that time gained upon us so alarmingly, that there was no possibility of keeping the vessel much longer afloat ; and indeed it required the greatest promptitude to enable us to lower the boat and clear the wreck before the waves closed over it, so narrowly had we escaped being buried with it in the deep.

Through the whole of that dreadful night, I had toiled unceasingly with the sailors on deck, endeavouring by my example to stimulate them to labour on with alacrity and discipline, even after the hope of saving the vessel was gone. When it was at length necessary to abandon her, I went into the boat in my turn, unprovided even with a

cloak, and taking an oar in hand, prepared myself to share cheerfully every fatigue as well as privation with my comrades in misfortune. It may easily be conceived how great those privations and fatigues must have been ; as well as what fortitude was required from one who, like me, had ever been accustomed to a life of ease, to bear them with an unbroken spirit. Bareheaded and stripped to the shirt, I laboured at the oar, with little intermission, for three successive days and nights ; nor during all that time were my eyes closed in sleep, or my limbs stretched to rest ; a few morsels only of damaged biscuit appeased my hunger, and a few drops of water quenched my thirst.

On the fourth morning of our perilous and painful voyage, we were cheered by the sight of a distant sail. Every heart leaped with joy, every tongue uttered a shout of gladness ; for now we imagined all our dangers past, all our sufferings ended, and, stimulated by the hope of rest and safety, we plied our oars with redoubled vigour. Happily our signals were perceived by the friendly vessel, which immediately bearing towards us, soon relieved our misery by taking us on board ; and, by a singular piece of good fortune, it proved to be a small trading vessel bound for Taganrogh, the very port to which we were destined.

There we at length arrived in a state of absolute destitution, which, though to many of my hardy comrades in suffering it was so little a novelty as to be scarcely regarded, was to me, a stranger in a foreign land, an evil of fearful magnitude. Fortune, however, once more befriended me, and removed my anxiety and embarrassment, by showing me in the governor an officer with whom I had formerly lived on terms of intimacy. Our acquaintance was instantly renewed, for Cusmin Ivanovich was not of a character to shun his friends in difficulty; and, through his means, I was provided with every comfort requisite to enable me to pass the time pleasantly, whilst waiting for letters and remittances from my agent at St. Petersburg.

Cusmin Ivanovich was a man of more than common merit, and the high official situation he held giving him an opportunity of displaying all his good qualities in their fairest light, he profited so well by the occasion, that, whilst discharging the duties of his station with rigid strictness, he succeeded in winning the esteem of all who knew him. Nor was he less fortunate in domestic than in public life, being blessed with that sweetener of all evils, an amiable and devoted wife, whose whole happiness was centered in her husband.

Indeed Anna Petrovna would in turn have engrossed all his cares, have occupied all his thoughts, had she not made him the father of two lovely daughters, not less amiable nor less charming than herself. But though the solicitude and affection of Cusmin Ivanovich were thus prevented from resting on one object alone, this proved a fresh source of domestic pleasure; for, if he regarded his daughters with more than the common pride and tenderness of a father, it was because he saw they were the infant copies of their mother, not only reflecting her beauty, but also possessing her gentle disposition.

It happened that whilst I was yet remaining at Taganrogh, Cusmin Ivanovich was called upon, by some affairs connected with his public duties, to go to St. Petersburg; and, as he did not think it probable his absence would be protracted beyond a few weeks, he did not take his family with him, though in leaving them he did no small violence to his feelings, for this was the first time he had been separated from them, even for a single day.

Not long after he had commenced his journey, I went to pay an uninvited visit to Anna Petrovna; the friendship her husband had professed for me having placed me on terms of such perfect intimacy with his family, that I was accustomed to

spend my afternoons in their society, whenever so inclined. This was an advantage I delighted to make use of, for Anna Petrovna was one of the most cheerful and amiable of women, whilst, in the good-humoured playfulness of Olga and Lubinka, her daughters, I found a never-failing source of pleasure. It is, perhaps, one of my weaknesses to be fond of children, but of such children who would not be fond? They were, in fact, children only in name; their acuteness and sagacity being beyond their years, whilst they were in person graceful as young fawns.

On the occasion mentioned, I was pleased, on entering the room where Anna Petrovna was sitting, to find she had so far recovered from her late distress, as to be able to welcome me with her usual cheerful serenity, at the same time inviting me to join in a little family festival arranged for that evening. "You know," said she, "that to-morrow one of our great fasts commences, and on this evening it is a custom with us for the different branches of each family to meet and feast together, after which they take leave of each other at parting, as though that parting were to be their last." Whilst yet speaking, the priest expected to assist on the occasion was ushered in, clad in long robes of silk, his

beard flowing down upon his breast, and a golden crucifix suspended round his neck by a massive chain of the same metal. Without noticing any of the party, he advanced towards a painting of some favourite saint, fixed in a frame of silver against the wall, and before which was suspended a burning taper. Here, crossing himself repeatedly, and devoutly bowing, he chaunted in an under voice an invocation, in which he was accompanied by all present; and then, turning towards Anna Petrovna, he presented her a very small loaf of consecrated bread, marked with various figures. In taking it, she bent to kiss his hand, which in courtesy he withdrew, and, making the sign of the cross, blessed her; as he did also to many others, who, in like manner, approached to kiss his hand and receive his benediction.

The rest of the evening passed without any other remarkable observance, until towards its close, when the servants of the family entering the room to which their mistress with her friends had retired, having partaken of the entertainment prepared for them, for a few moments joined the guests in prayer and genuflexions before the picture of their saint; after which they all indiscriminately embraced, bidding each other adieu, at the same time exchanging mutual forgiveness

for whatever subject of anger there happened to exist between them.

It was some days after witnessing this affecting scene ere I again repeated my visit, and the alteration which had, in the mean time, been effected in the appearance of Anna Petrovna filled me with alarm. Her look of cheerful serenity was gone. Pale and haggard, and with an air of deep dejection, she told me she had passed two sleepless nights at the bed-side of Lubinka, who was indisposed, though she trusted not seriously, in consequence of the change of diet imposed on her by the attempt to observe the fast. "For," added she, "the strictness of our church is so great, that we are not only forbidden to taste of meat and fish, but are also commanded to abstain from almost all those wholesome articles of diet to which children are accustomed. I fear," she continued, "I have been very wrong in inflicting so great a penance on my poor child, though I thought I could not err in observing any precept of my religion. To invalids, however, some latitude is given, and as I am now, by the advice of our doctor, feeding the dear infant with more nourishing food, I hope to-morrow to see her well again."

Anxious to know how my little favourite fared

under her change of regimen, and hoping, yet fearing for her safety, I hastened the next morning to make my inquiries at the earliest hour propriety would admit. On entering the house, every object which caught my eye showed that my fears were but too well founded. The darkened windows, the sorrowful air even of the lowest servant, the death-like stillness, broken only by an occasional sigh or half-suppressed whisper from some of the domestics in waiting, every thing I observed confirmed and increased my alarm, as I walked silently through the suite of outer rooms, and approached the chamber in which the dear child was lying. The door was partially closed; I gently opened it, and stood a few moments, ere I was remarked, gazing through the obscurity on the group before me. The curtains had been drawn to exclude the glare of the morning sun, but a small lamp glimmering before the picture of the Virgin immediately over the couch on which the little sufferer was extended, afforded light enough to show me her once lovely face. But scarcely could I recognise in those swollen features, those burning cheeks and bloodshot eyes, the little playful innocent whose sweet countenance so lately beamed with smiles and glowed with health; all

her cheerful looks were gone, and her mild brow was bent in pain.

Her mother was kneeling at the bedside, apparently absorbed in prayer, and did not observe me to be near her, until startled by a deep sigh, which broke involuntarily from me. Raising herself from her knees, and wiping away her tears, she endeavoured to welcome me with a collected air; but it was beyond her power to suppress her feelings, and again bursting into tears, she grasped my hand, intreating me to strengthen with my opinion her hopes that her child was not in danger. "Our doctor assures me," she continued, "she will soon recover, but her looks alarm me beyond expression; for though I follow his advice exactly, and give her every thing warm and nourishing, yet she does not mend. Merciful Heaven!—if she should die, and I the cause, what will become of me?" Poor little Lubinka, interrupting her, cried in a feeble voice, "Oh no, mamma, I shall not die!—Tell mamma that I shall not die," said she, addressing herself to me; and, as she spoke, she pressed the hand I had extended to raise her pillow. Her burning touch thrilled to my heart, and gave me the conviction that I deceived her when, bending to kiss her forehead, I promised she should soon be well.

No sooner indeed had I left them, than I was tormented with the idea that the physician must have mistaken his patient's case ; I felt convinced she was in the last stage of fever ; and, racked throughout the day with anxiety for the little sufferer, both on her own account, and for her father's sake, I again returned, before the close of evening, to learn what change had taken place. My heart misgave me as I approached the door, and I almost dreaded to enter it. Some secret monitor seemed to say, " Prepare your mind for sorrow, for you are going to the house of mourning ;" and too truly did it warn me. I entered unobserved ; no servants were in attendance, the outer rooms were deserted, and the windows, nearly closed, only partially admitted the faint light of departing day. I stood for some moments, fearing the worst and hesitating to go further, when the sound of a low chaunt, proceeding from the inner chamber, fell painfully on my ear. No longer doubting how to act, I hastened noiselessly forwards, to add my supplications to those I imagined were offering for the child of my friend ; but how shall I find words to depict the scene which then presented itself ? The priest whom I had so lately seen joining in the festival of forgiveness and peace, now stood at the bedside of

the dying infant, uttering in a low voice prayers for her parting soul, and holding the crucifix to her almost unconscious lips; whilst the sub-deacons, ranged behind him with lighted tapers in their hands, chaunted the responses in an under-tone, and the assembled domestics, kneeling on either side, endeavoured to accompany them. The light from the tapers falling on the couch on which poor Lubinka was extended, showed but too distinctly the awful change a few short hours had wrought in her appearance. Her face was no longer flushed and swollen, her eye-balls no longer suffused with blood—but her features were collapsed, her eyes half-closed and sunken, and a cold dew spread over her pale forehead. Her sister Olga, bathed in tears and almost choking with convulsive sobs, knelt on the bed behind, endeavouring to support her drooping head, and call back animation by her kisses. But life was quickly ebbing, sense and feeling were almost gone, she was hardly conscious of her sister's grief, though her languid eye still lingered on the spot where her mother stood wringing her hands in agony.

Anna Petrovna had not fortitude to support the sudden visitation which had thus fallen upon her; she sank beneath its pressure; but in her sorrow there was one thought, above all others, that dis-

tressed her, one thought which drove her to distraction. The idea that the fatal illness of her child had been brought on by the severity of the penance her superstitious scruples had imposed, filled her with terror and remorse, and took from her the only reflection which could have saved her from despair. Bewildered with dreadful imaginations, and regarding herself as the destroyer of her own offspring, she stood gazing wildly on the shrunken livid features of the dying child, wringing her hands, and imploring Heaven to spare her that sight of horror. She appeared neither to remark any thing of the ceremony going forwards, nor to pay any attention, either to the priest or attendants who were kneeling in prayer near the bed; her whole soul was concentrated in one point, and rested only on the one loved object; every thing else around her was unseen or unregarded.

At length the solemn rites drew to a conclusion, and the priest with his attendants retiring, left the room in obscurity; but scarcely had they withdrawn, when a cry burst from the wretched mother in a voice so piteous that it pierced me to the soul. "My child, my child," she exclaimed, "I have killed my child." This seemed the last effort of a breaking heart; hardly had the words escaped

her, when she fell senseless and exhausted on the bed. The attendants who still remained in the room assisted in bearing their unhappy mistress to her chamber, and, after a time, succeeded in restoring her to life, but it was merely to life bereft of every consolatory feeling.

When with returning sense she again woke to a perception of her misery, she raised herself feebly from the pillow, entreating to be taken back to the scene of her affliction; but alas! too late—the dear infant's life had already flown—her parting breath was already gone.

It was some weeks before Anna Petrovna recovered sufficiently from the shock this sad event had inflicted on her peace, to take any interest in life. Her days and nights were alike joyless and without rest. The dreadful thought that she had brought on herself the misery which had befallen her, that she had by mismanagement destroyed her own child, haunted her perpetually, and her consequent self-upbraidings rendered her incapable of listening to the voice of consolation. But, as time wore away, and the violence of her first emotions beginning to subside, left her mind susceptible of other impressions, a fresh cause of affliction was added to the distresses that already bore so heavily upon her, which, increasing from

hour to hour, soon absorbed the sense of every other suffering.

This new source of alarm arose from the protracted absence of her husband; to whom, the first moment she conceived the illness of her daughter to be attended with symptoms of danger, she had sent a courier, with letters informing him of their misfortune, and entreating him to hasten his return. As the distance from St. Petersburg was so very great, she could not expect a speedy answer to her despatches, though they were urgent to the last degree; nor, indeed, was her mind, immediately after the death of her child, in such a state as to be able to spare one thought for any thing but her present sorrow. But when the first violence of her grief had somewhat abated, and many weeks had passed without bringing her any intelligence of Cusmin, she began to wonder at the strange delay, till, by degrees, her wonder assumed the form of fear and most intense anxiety; day followed day, and week followed week, in quick succession, yet no tidings reached her of her husband. When her anxiety had thus been wrought to the highest pitch, and she was on the point of despatching another special messenger to St. Petersburg, a stranger arrived at Taganrogh, who

brought intelligence that served to complete her misery.

He stated that he had travelled some part of the road in company with Cusmin Ivanovich; whom he had joined, after having accidentally met him at two or three post-houses, and found they were each destined to the same place. He added, that arriving late one evening at a small post-house on a branch of the river Oka, where it crosses the road not far from Kalouga, they were told it had been so much increased by a sudden flood as to be no longer fordable, and that the current was far too rapid to allow them to attempt it on the raft.

Satisfied with this account, the stranger had determined to remain patiently where he was until the flood should have diminished, or, at least, to wait there till the morning, and not try to pass a dangerous river in the night; but Cusmin, he said, eager to continue his journey without loss of time, was not to be deterred by any persuasion from endeavouring to surmount the danger, and, by the offer of a considerable reward, induced some of the people at the station to make the attempt to ferry him over. It was with great difficulty his carriage and horses could be placed upon the raft,

which was rendered almost too unsteady by the force of the current for the horses to keep their feet ; indeed, the probability of their meeting with some untoward accident appeared so great, that those who remained on shore ranged themselves with torches along the bank of the stream, both for the purpose of lighting their friends in their hazardous undertaking, and of being ready to offer assistance if necessary. Nor was it many minutes before all the help they could give was wanted. Scarcely had the raft reached the middle of the current, when the horses, alarmed, became quite unmanageable, plunging so violently that no effort could keep it steady ; their struggles increased as the danger became greater, till they at last broke from their driver's hold and dashed into the stream, dragging with them some of the men, who had got entangled in the ropes. At the same moment the raft, thrown to one side as much by the plunging of the horses as the roughness of the waves, was turned over, and all who were on it precipitated into the flood. Those on shore made every exertion to rescue them, even at the peril of their own lives, though without success ; the unfortunate sufferers were seen struggling for some time against the torrent, vainly endeavouring to catch at the floating trunks, or pieces of loose

timber their comrades had thrown towards them ; but, at length, exhausted, they sank, never more to rise.—Not one was saved.

This intelligence was almost a death-stroke to poor Anna Petrovna, who thus found herself bereaved of her husband at nearly the same moment she had lost her child. The misery and desolation in which she felt herself thus suddenly involved, destroyed what reviving peace had begun to spring in her mind, and again plunged her into the gloomiest depths of despair. Abandoning herself to a despondency so hopeless that it took from her every wish or regard for life, she neglected all such care of herself as the precarious state of her health required, and seemed to court the approach of death. Nor, to appearance, was his approach likely to be long delayed ; and had she, at that melancholy period, been left alone, to feed in solitude on her thoughts, without doubt her sorrows must speedily have been hidden in the grave. But there was a little angel who constantly hovered near her in that time of trouble, to check the progress of despair,—to arrest the arm of death. In her moments of greatest desolation, the affectionate Olga, like a guardian spirit, was ever at her side to whisper comfort to her mind ; in her hours of darkest misery Olga was always with her,

trying by young endearments to console her grief. The same sweet child was her mother's nurse, physician, comforter, watching near her with exemplary fondness through many sleepless nights, and ministering to her wants through many restless days. When every other eye was heavy, and every other hand tired by the painful duties of the sick room, Olga's affectionate looks were still fixed unwearied on her mother, and her little hand was still prompt to supply her wants.

The tender solicitude of the fond child proved a powerful medicine both to the mind and body of her parent, and, with the aid of time, restored her to comparative tranquillity and health. The violence of her grief, by slow degrees, subsiding, gave place to an uncomplaining, but settled melancholy; when, though her cheerfulness was gone, and her happiness for ever flown, she ceased to regard existence as a painful burden, and began again to take some interest in life: for, recollecting the trials to which an orphan girl must ever be exposed, she dreaded the idea of leaving her only child to encounter them unprotected; and, stimulated by that dread to rouse herself to exertion, she once more acquired energy to shake off, in some measure, the lethargy which oppressed her spirits.

I was induced by these melancholy circumstances to delay my departure from Taganrogh even a few weeks after I had received the remittances for which I had been so long waiting, that I might endeavour to requite to the widow of my friend some of the kindnesses he had shown me ; but, when I found that Anna Petrovna had become somewhat resigned to the dispensation which first taught her to mourn—that she ceased to dwell only on past afflictions, and began to devote some attention to the means of improving her future comfort by cherishing the young virtues of her darling child, I at length bade her a mournful adieu, and renewed my journey towards Tcherkask, the capital of the Don Cossacks.

In traversing a country but little frequented by strangers, the traveller will constantly find something on his route to interest or amuse him ; some trifling incident, from its novelty, to enliven the tedium of the journey, though the features of the landscape should be flat and uninviting as the broad plains over which my road now lay. At least, I found it so when passing through the country of the Don Cossacks. Scarcely a day went by but I had to remark some trait of character, or notice some particular observance, almost peculiar to the place and people : of these,

perhaps, the most striking was a scene I witnessed at a small town not far from Taganrogh. Upon arriving there I found the streets deserted, the houses shut; and, on inquiry, learnt that its inhabitants were assembled in the burying-ground, there celebrating the "fête of remembrance"—a fête dedicated to the memory of departed friends.

Led by curiosity to be present at so singular a ceremony, I hastened towards the place of interment; and, following the direction of the crowd, entered the church a little before the conclusion of the funeral service, which is performed, on these occasions, previously to the sprinkling of holy-water on the graves. The priests soon afterwards descending from the altar, issued, in procession, from the church, followed by all the people; when they renewed the prayers for the souls of the departed at the graves, whilst sprinkling them with holy-water. In this solemn service the assembled multitude assisted with great apparent devotion; but scarcely was it concluded, when the priests, forgetting their solemnity, and the people their devotion, formed themselves into many little parties, each of which hurried to spread a feast upon the tomb of their buried friend. This they, for the most part, partook of with a degree of conviviality but little suited to the place, though there

were some few exceptions to such ill-timed festivity ;—some few groups of mourners in the crowd, who showed by strong marks of sorrow that they, indeed, were met together only to pay a sad tribute to the memory of some loved friend or relative. Surprised rather than pleased with the motley character of this strange ceremony, I turned away from it unsatisfied, and again resumed my journey.

At the time of my arrival at the Cossack capital, that ancient seat of their independence, public rejoicings were making to celebrate the election of the distinguished Platoff to the high dignity of Hetman ; and the unbounded hospitality of his welcome, which would not be refused, offered a pleasing impediment to the progress of my journey, by obliging me to join in the pleasures or amusements which each day brought forth.

These, for the most part, were boisterous, it is true ; but such as suited the taste of the Hetman and his people. Of this description was a general hunting party of the wild horses that range over their boundless steppes ; on which occasion the Hetman and some of his attendants, mounted on the fleetest Kherghis steeds, issued from the town with music and banners ; whilst others, having previously spread themselves over the plain, drove

many of the wild coursers towards their chief. The chase then began, and any particular horse singled from the herd was pursued, till some one of the hunters, more fortunate than the rest, succeeded in throwing a coil of rope round his neck; when, before he could again break loose, another would complete the capture by throwing a second noose from the other side, and thus so firmly securing him that in despite of kicking and plunging he would be compelled to gallop off the field between his captors. This was a favourite amusement with the Cossacks, as it required both courage and dexterity; and those who returned most successful from such a chase were greeted with general applause. The Hetman bold, vigorous, and well mounted, was one of the most successful huntsmen on this occasion; and he re-entered his town with even greater éclat than he had left it, whilst the people welcomed his return with shouts of admiration.

The next day the rejoicings were continued by a review of the military force, and a trial of skill in the various Cossack military exercises. It was truly an exhilarating sight to witness with what enthusiasm and dexterity the numerous regiments of light cavalry, of which their force consisted, performed their different evolutions; all vigorous

young men, armed, clothed, mounted, at their individual expense, and serving their country at the price of their lives and property, with no other reward than praise and honour. But their Hetman, raised from the rank of simple Cossack, was an example of the high reward given in their country to merit; and each individual seemed bent on obtaining the same honour in his turn. Indeed, it is common with them to encourage each other to daring exploits by repeating their well-known proverb, "Go on, brave Cossack, thou shalt be Hetman."

The approach of the Hetman was announced by the singularly wild notes of their national music; which the soldiers joined with their voices, singing verses in commendation of their chief. It has been said that music has an extraordinary power in exciting the spirits of soldiers, and this saying is undoubtedly very applicable to the Cossacks; for, as their song proceeded, their enthusiastic vehemence increased to such a degree, that each appeared to imagine himself the hero whose praises he was celebrating.

Their discipline and exercises are not less remarkable than their music. At a signal given, scattering themselves over the plain, they seemed to fly before an enemy, galloping in apparent con-

fusion, but still firing their pistols as they fled; till, at another signal, suddenly rallying, they formed themselves again in masses and returned at full speed, with their long spears lowered as if to charge the enemy. It struck me as being a mode of attack and defence similar to that ascribed to the Parthians; and it is, undoubtedly, well adapted to light irregular cavalry, being, perhaps, the only one which troops of that description could use with any advantage.

In their individual exercises they showed even greater skill than in their military evolutions. Indeed, the dexterity with which they used their long spears was so great, and they were such fearless horsemen, that they would strike a mark with the spear, or swing themselves round on their saddles, and, suspended by one leg, pick up any thing from the ground, when their horses were at their quickest speed. In such amusements and exercises the days of rejoicing rolled quickly on, whilst the evenings were spent in feasting, dancing, and every convivial pleasure.

As during my long residence with Dubroffski I had acquired a slight knowledge of the Russian language, I soon found myself with my Cossack friends on terms of perfect familiarity; for when they heard me speak in broken Russian, it so

delighted them that all formality was at once laid aside, and they admitted me to the intimacy of an old acquaintance. Indeed, they seemed so fond of hearing my broken accents, that they almost compelled me to stay amongst them much longer than I intended; their hospitality was so unbounded, their pressing intreaties to me to delay my journey so urgent, I hardly knew how to refuse them. If I could have forgotten those I had so lately left for ever, the days I spent at Tcherkask would have been really days of pleasure; so delightful is it to find all arms extended for our friendly welcome. But I had that upon my mind which prevented my full enjoyment of any pleasure, though old and young appeared equally eager to converse with and entertain the stranger.

CHAPTER VII.

AMONGST those who most courted my acquaintance, and with whose society I was most delighted, was an elderly man, the venerable Boulatoff, whose urbanity and intelligence excited in me feelings of more than common respect. He seemed conscious of the favourable impression he had made, and by every art of courtesy endeavoured to improve it. Thus I soon ceased to regard him in the light of a mere casual acquaintance; and he appeared to have conceived sentiments for me not unworthy the name of friendship. These sentiments it was my great delight to cultivate, for I found his mind was of a superior cast; and his conversation, though greatly tinged with melancholy, the most impressive I had heard. Indeed, he was a man who had not passed through the world unseared by its ills and sorrows, and the memory of them appeared to have made a deep impression on his mind; in some measure, perhaps, to have subdued its ardour. But though this might be diminished, his affections were in no

impressive, more solemnly affecting, than this part of the ceremony ; when the venerable old priest, unbent by age, his white beard hanging to his waist, his silk robes flowing on the ground, and a large crucifix suspended round his neck, ascending the upper step of the altar, with hands extended and face upraised, pronounced the promise of Heaven's blessing on the marriage vow, if held inviolate, but the threatenings of bitter punishment on its neglect. The assembled crowd remained listening, in mute attention, to his words ; nor did any one move from the spot where he stood till the priest, descending from the altar, led the way towards the house prepared for Dmetri and his bride, into which, having blessed it, he conducted the whole party, amidst music and acclamations, to join the marriage feast. Delight and pleasure beamed on every face ; but Dmetri and Natalia were the happiest of the happy, and in the fulness of their joy showed a gaiety of heart which all seemed emulous to equal or excel.

In the course of the evening, when Dmetri and his bride were dancing together one of the favourite dances of the country, Boulatoff, retired to a remote part of the chamber, sat gazing on them abstractedly ; his mournful air showing that his feelings were deeply interested, his mind in-

tensely occupied by some painful subject. He appeared for some time to contend with his thoughts, but they had too painfully affected him to be subdued; and, at length, covering his face, he endeavoured to conceal his tears.

Almost instinctively I drew near him, and seated myself by his side; the depressed and melancholy state of my mind making me feel, with morbid sensibility, for the grief of others. I spoke not to him; my feelings forbade me to interrupt his sorrow; but he soon marked the sympathy expressed in my countenance, and acknowledged it by grasping my hand. "An old man's tears," said he, "can flow from no light cause. You see that boy, the object of my dotage, how light-hearted, how happy! Alas! alas! but a few short years are passed since his father, my only child, the pride of my strength, was such a one as he is;—but a few short years are gone, since I gave him to a bride beautiful and young as Natalia; since I beheld him loved and cherished, glorying in the vigour of youth, and honour of his name; and since I adored him almost more than Heaven—but now—oh, Vladimir! child of my fondest desires, my earliest affections, dear, lost, unhappy son, where are now that glory, that pride, that joy, I once had in thee?—Where the fond hopes I che-

confirmed, and our country was about to become the seat of insurrection and rebellion, then, indeed, sorrow fell heavily upon us ; for we saw, with terror, that Vladimir would be compelled to follow the tide of public opinion, which, daily acquiring fresh force, was quickly becoming too violent to be withstood. The passions of any people, if called into unusual action, are always unruly and blind ; and, when popular indignation is once excited, it is ever deaf to the voice of prudence, and regardless of the dictates of truth or reason : so this feeling in the minds of the Cossacks, raised by the falsehood and imposture of Pugatcheff, disdained even the conviction of error ; and, soon gaining from indulgence irresistible force, spread through the country like a whirlwind, involving all men in its vortex.

Pugatcheff had originally been a soldier ; but, having become discontented with his commander, he deserted, and fled to Poland, where some of the lowest order of priests of the Greek church, who were Roskoluiki, or schismatics, and had suffered persecution in Russia for their religious opinions, were struck by his strong personal resemblance to the Emperor Peter the Third, and from that circumstance were inspired with the idea of using him as the instrument of retaliation on their

persecutors. They found no difficulty in seducing him to their purpose, when they prepared him to carry on his imposture and support his assumed character, with an art which quite deceived the confiding and unwary Cossacks. But, independent of his address, the state of feeling at that time among the Cossacks generally, was such as to favour his design ; the oppression they had lately suffered having so inflamed or irritated their minds, that they were already disposed to adopt violent measures even before Pugatcheff made his appearance among them. They received him, therefore, with credulous joy, and did not question the truth of his assertions when he assumed the title of Peter the Third ; pretending that he had escaped from the murderers sent to destroy him, through the extraordinary intervention of Providence. The flame these pretences raised among the Cossacks spread with such rapidity through the neighbouring hordes of Tartars, that in a very short time he found himself at the head of a brave and numerous army. His troops were undisciplined, it is true ; but their courage supplied the place of order, and he led them to victory and conquest. Nearly all the Russian generals sent in succession against him were defeated in various engagements ; and many towns and fortresses were taken and destroyed.

earnestly did we listen to these reports, how fondly did we dwell upon his praise! In some measure, it consoled our grief, and reconciled us to his absence.

Though almost every day was marked by some praiseworthy action on the part of my son, yet there is one I will mention more particularly, as it had a material influence on his after fate. When Pugatcheff was advancing towards Moscow, he committed nameless horrors on the march, burning the villages and massacring the inhabitants with indiscriminate fury; but to induce his followers to adhere steadily to his cause, he divided the plunder among them without reserve. Vladimir, however, had refused the least participation in the booty, until the army had arrived as far as Belova, a village near Kursk, in the neighbourhood of which stood the chateau of Prince Gertchakoff. This gallant young nobleman, disdaining to fly at the approach of danger, collected his peasants round him, hoping, by a brave defence of his chateau, to be able to stop the progress of the Cossack force, till the Russian army, then rapidly advancing, should relieve him. But his feeble peasantry being quickly overpowered, he was wounded, made a prisoner, and his chateau with his young wife fell into our hands. Pugatcheff immediately gave

his accustomed order to burn and destroy ; but Vladimir, admiring the gallant character of the Prince, interposed to save him. With that view he claimed the chateau and prisoners, as a compensation for the different shares of plunder he had foregone ; and having hitherto served without reward, Pugatcheff happily did not think the claim unjust, but granted it unhesitatingly.

In making this demand, Vladimir only sought to do a generous action : as soon therefore as he was put in possession of his prize, he not only restored the despairing wife to her wounded husband, and gave back the whole of their property untouched, but he nursed his prisoner as a brother, and watched over his safety, to protect him from further injury on the part of the Cossacks, with the vigilance of a friend.

A good deed seldom goes unrewarded, and Vladimir very soon gained the recompense of this generous action. Before Pugatcheff and his forces had advanced many days march nearer Moscow, they were met by the Russian army commanded by the invincible Panin. The result of a battle with this formidable army and more formidable commander could not be doubtful. The Cossacks were beaten, routed, dispersed, scattered over the country, pursued, and massacred

without mercy. Vladimir happily escaped the carnage, and flying towards the chateau of Gertchakoff, there claimed the protection he had so lately granted.

This providential escape to the chateau was more than fortunate, for mercy was not an attribute of Panin, nor of the government which employed him, and the Cossacks had no claim to mercy. The few who escaped death in the battle or the flight, were sent to Siberia, there to toil through the miserable remnant of existence in the mines. But a more dreadful fate awaited Pugatcheff,—if there can be one more dreadful than that of slavery in Siberian mines. Wounded and a prisoner, the unhappy man was chained like some ferocious beast, and, being inclosed in an iron cage, was carried through the country he had so lately devastated, and shown as a monster to the wondering people. But when they had feasted their eyes on his sufferings for a sufficient length of time to dissipate the terror of his name, he was delivered over to a cruel death; after which the mangled portions of his body were exposed in different quarters of Moscow, where they were left to putrify or be devoured by the vultures.

Both gratitude and honour demanded it as a duty of the Prince Gertchakoff to use every effort

to rescue my son from the dangers which encompassed him, and the Prince was not wanting in either honour or gratitude. He felt and acknowledged that Vladimir ought not, in justice, to be made responsible for the atrocities of his commander; but he was likewise aware that the people called loudly for vengeance on the Cossacks, a vengeance their rulers seemed fully inclined to gratify. The Prince therefore justly feared the consequences would be fatal to Vladimir, should his retreat be discovered; for to endeavour by individual representations to turn the course of what was called retributive justice, would have been a hopeless effort; the public offender would not be pardoned in the private benefactor. On this account, he was unwilling to intercede with the general or the government, before their vindictive feelings should have subsided; and he was no less fearful of retaining Vladimir concealed in the chateau, lest, through the treachery or folly of domestics, he might be betrayed to the troops then almost close to Belova. Neither would he allow Vladimir to leave the chateau alone, as he proposed, and endeavour to make his way back to Tcherkask, well knowing that, in the long and perilous journey through the country so lately traversed by the Cossacks, his destruction must be

inevitable ; for, by no disguise, would he be able to deceive the alarmed curiosity, or elude the vengeance, of the infuriated people.

Under these circumstances, the Princess suggested the idea of sending their preserver, disguised, with one trusty servant as a guide, to her brother the Count Tzaritzin, who lived near Kiev, and with whom he might be more easily concealed until an opportunity should occur for him to return by a safer route to his own country. As the road to Kiev did not pass through those provinces which Pugatcheff had desolated, this proposal was approved of ; and it was determined that Vladimir, accompanied by Ivan, a servant in whose fidelity the Prince had perfect confidence, should immediately set forward in the disguise of pedlars, the Princess engaging to furnish their packs with valuables from her own wardrobe.

To all appearance Ivan was a man worthy the trust reposed in him, possessing intelligence hardly inferior to the zeal and fidelity he had ever shown in the service of his master. This, indeed, he proved by conducting Vladimir, by devious ways, through the neighbouring district, occupied by the advanced posts of the enemy, with so much sagacity that they reached the open country without impediment or danger.

In their assumed character they entered the different villages without fear, and went boldly to any mansion which might chance to be on their road. At whatever gate they knocked, whether of the rich or poor, they were sure of a ready admittance; for in a country where towns are so thinly scattered and shops so ill supplied, the rich are generally disposed to examine or purchase some of the novelties which travelling merchants or pedlars may chance to have with them, whilst the villagers are seldom unwilling to welcome and lodge them for the sake of a little gossip, or in the hope of some trifling present.

Pursuing this course, they arrived within a very short distance of their destination without having suffered any serious accident, or met with any very alarming adventure; and, in a few more hours, Vladimir would have been in safety. Every thing had hitherto favoured his escape, every thing seemed to smile upon his hopes; and he already anticipated the delight of soon mingling his tears of gladness with those his wife and father would shed in transport at his return. How shall I go on with my narrative? Sighs check my utterance, tears flow even at the remembrance of its dreadful end. Gracious Heaven! that one so good, so excellent, should have fallen by the hand of a vile

assassin—torn from all his earthly hopes even by the man he trusted ! When I think of it, grief almost disturbs my reason. It is a heavy visitation to be bereft of all one loves at one fell stroke—to see the resting-place of all one's hopes and all one's affections tumbled into ruin ; few minds would be strong enough to bear so great a sorrow—mine was not—it sank under it, and has left me only a broken spirit to support me in affliction.

Vladimir carried with him a considerable sum of money, and the Princess Gertchakoff had secretly placed in his pack several very valuable jewels. She did so from the best of all motives, gratitude ; but that which was done in kindness, proved unhappily the cause of his destruction. When he first discovered the jewels, he displayed them without hesitation to Ivan, praising their beauty, and commending the delicate generosity of the Princess in so concealing them. He could have no reserve in his communications with one whose faithful honesty and courage had been proved on many trying occasions, who moreover was rather his companion than servant ; and he spoke of their value without fear or suspicion. Alas ! he little knew how strong temptation is to corrupt the heart and draw men into crime. Ivan, though a confidential servant, was still a domestic slave, exposed

at all moments to the danger of being sold like a piece of mere household furniture in any fit of passion or caprice.

The longing after liberty must be intense in the breasts of men so situated, since to gain it, those not naturally vicious are sometimes guilty of great offences; but if, in addition to liberty, wealth also may be obtained by the commission of a single crime, I believe few slaves will be found sufficiently virtuous to resist the temptation. So it proved with Ivan; the sight of so much wealth, which he thought would give him the means of enjoying freedom, could he get possession of it and abscond to a foreign country, overcame every virtuous feeling, and inflamed him with diabolical desires to which he was before a stranger. He resolved to become the master of it, though at the price of murder. When Vladimir appeared poor and was in danger, Ivan had risked his life to serve him; yet so inconsistent are human passions, that the same man who had then displayed such generous feeling, could now think of perpetrating the basest of all crimes against his companion and friend. For some days he meditated sullenly on his determination, wishing yet hesitating to strike the blow; and he almost reached Kiev before he had worked himself to the state of desperation necessary for

depth of misery, showed him his wife, his father despairing, broken-hearted at his loss, bade him think of them, and endeavour to cling to life ; then pointed to that good Providence which cares for all its creatures, and told him to rely on its protection. Raised to confidence by these reflections, he exerted the little remnant of his strength, to crawl closer to the rock for shelter, trusting that the return of morning might bring with it some means of relief. Nor was he disappointed in this hope ; before the sun had risen, he was happily found by one whose life was devoted to works of charity, when his sufferings were relieved, as far as might be by the hands of man.

A good old monk, journeying from some distant mission towards his monastery at Kiev, passed near the spot where Vladimir was lying. The sight of blood, the groans of an apparently dying man, stopped his progress, and looking anxiously around, he soon discovered the object of his search, supporting himself with pain against the rock. No sooner had the charitable man found my poor son, faint and helpless, than he hastened to afford him assistance, and endeavoured to mitigate his suffering by washing the clotted gore from his breast, chafing his temples, drawing water from a neighbouring spring to moisten his parched lips, and using every

means in his power to bring back warmth and circulation to his cold and stiffening limbs. Then, wrapping him in his own ample cloak, with the aid of his peasant attendant, he bore him to his pavoska,* and having laid him gently in it, carefully supported his drooping head, whilst the peasant drove slowly and cautiously towards the monastery.

The journey, though not very long, was very painful, and nothing but the extreme care of the monk could have prevented Vladimir from sinking out of existence even on the road. They did, however, arrive at their destination before death had closed his sufferings, though so exhausted that each gasp seemed to be his last; and the Archimandrite of the monastery received the dying stranger with benevolent commiseration. The care of nursing him was committed to Yakovich, the monk who had so charitably taken him to the monastery, nor could it have been entrusted to better hands. The humane man placed his suffering charge on his own poor couch, and tended him with the solicitude of a parent; and when Vladimir, after having passed many painful, restless hours, at length sank into sleep, Yakovich knelt by his side, and prayed for him.

After slumbering a few hours, Vladimir awoke

* Little cart.

somewhat revived, though his sleep had been broken and uneasy. He then found strength at intervals, to make the Archimandrite and monk acquainted with his story. "And oh!" he added, "if I could but see them again before I die, if I could but once more embrace my wife and father, I should leave the world in peace." "My son," replied the Archimandrite, "be comforted and do not despair; your days shall yet be lengthened, you shall yet live many years for those you love." "Oh! never, never shall I see them more; my hours are numbered, my mortal life is drawing to a close, the hand of death is on me. And must I die without one parting word, one parting look; —leave all I love and all I honour without one last adieu? Nadejda! Father! how can I bear to leave them thus? It is hard, very hard to be cut off by a base hand even in the bloom of happiness; but to leave thee, my wife, thee, my parent, disconsolate, inconsolable, mourning my unhappy fate, leave thee without one last farewell, oh! it breaks my heart." "Console yourself, my son," rejoined the Archimandrite, "and trust in Heaven; a merciful Providence watches over us, and will not abandon you. In the mean time we will all pray, fervently pray, that your life may be spared, at least until the return of a brother of our

order, whom I will immediately despatch to carry tidings of your fate to Tcherkask; and then, my son, you shall again see, again embrace both wife and parent; perhaps too you shall welcome them with the smile of returning health." The kind words of the Archimandrite were as a healing balm to the sufferings of Vladimir, and the departure of the promised messenger gave new life to his hopes. Alas! alas! these reviving hopes were but like the last flickerings of a dying flame; they fluttered round him for a moment and expired.

When the messenger arrived at Tcherkask, he found Nadejda and myself mourning Vladimir as lost to us for ever. No tidings had reached us of him since the fatal day which witnessed the destruction of the Cossack army; we believed him slain in the rout, and we bewailed his death with unceasing tears. The account delivered us by the messenger gave a new direction to our grief, and excited alarms even more distressing than our previous sorrow. Vladimir was presented by it to our imagination, stretched on the bed of death, breathing his last among strangers in a distant land, and in vain wishing we were near to receive his parting sigh. Our souls died within us at the idea of being absent from him in the hour of sickness and suffering; at the thought that our efforts

to be with him in his last moments would probably be made in vain.

We delayed not a moment to commence the journey to Kiev; and, harassed with the constant fear of arriving only to witness the consummation of our misery, we continued day and night to urge on the horses without rest or intermission.

Worn out by anxiety, fatigue, and sorrow, we at length arrived there with exhausted strength, and minds ill prepared to support any new or greater trial. At the gate of the monastery the Archimandrite met us; but, whilst he extended his hand in welcome, his looks betrayed anguish and distress. It was the expression of a feeling that was not lost upon Nadejda. Her soul caught the alarm, and, in fluttering accents, she exclaimed, "Oh! tell me the worst, good father, do not doubt my strength—I am resigned to the will of Heaven, and can bear to hear it." "Alas! my daughter," was the good man's only answer; but he groaned in spirit, and turned to conceal the tear which was stealing down his furrowed cheek. Poor Nadejda! The Archimandrite's words told her that Vladimir was no more; and struck like the voice of death upon her ear. Bowing her head, she fell upon my breast tearless and motionless. She long continued there almost insensible;

but, when she had recovered power to move and speak, she entreated to be led to the spot where Vladimir was lying. We yielded, unwillingly, to her entreaties; fearing, alas! too justly, that her weakened frame was incapable of bearing so great a shock. Scarcely could her trembling knees sustain her weight, as we supported her through the low, dark corridors, leading to the cell which contained all that was left to us of what was once so lovely, once so good. Oh, my child! could I but have seen thee once again ere life had flown, once more have clasped thee to my breast, the reflection that thou hadst not died in a land of strangers, alone, far distant from all who were dear to thee, might have mitigated the poignancy of my sorrow, have given me strength to bear thee to the grave with resignation. But no consolatory feeling was left me in that dreadful hour; I could only bathe thy pallid form with tears of anguish and regret. Bitter, bitter was the moment that showed me thy livid corpse stretched on its funereal bier; that pointed to the end of all my pride and all my happiness, and told me how vain are human hopes. Distracted, broken-hearted, I called on death to join me with him in the tomb; but I called in vain, death turned from my voice, and left me still to weep, still to mourn my son.

In a low dark cell, hung round with black, all that remained of Vladimir was laid on the monk's bare couch. A consecrated taper was burning at his head, and some monks stood near, repeating prayers for the dead. Nadejda tottered feebly towards the corpse; she uttered no shriek, she made no cry, her grief was deep but silent. Taking the livid hand of her once fond husband in hers, she bathed it with her tears, then knelt down to pray. Through the whole of that dismal night she continued kneeling by the bier immoveable; fixed to the spot by the petrifying hand of hopeless grief. During all those wretched hours there had been no intermission to her silent prayers, no cessation to her tears and sighs; but as the dawn drew nigh—when the heavy tolling of the funeral knell first struck upon her ear—startled and dismayed, she uttered a feeble cry, and, springing from the earth, clasped the dead form of her loved husband in her arms, and fainted on his breast.

Whilst she remained insensible I bore her from this heart-rending scene, to a distant part of the monastery prepared for her reception, and laid her on her couch. By the aid of the good Archimandrite I soon called her back to a momentary life and a transient sense of misery; when, opening her eyes once more, she turned them mourn-

fully towards me as I hung over her in agony, and, in a voice scarcely articulate, commended her soul to Heaven; then, gazing on me more intently, she added, in a deeper tone, “the pain of death is passed, and I go to join Vladimir in Heaven—when my soul has flown, lay me with him in the tomb.” Exhausted by the effort of saying even so much, she again fell back upon the pillow, whence she had slightly raised her head. These were the last words she spake, and from that moment a feeble pressure of the hand was the only sign she gave of sense or recognition. She lay still and motionless; her lips sometimes moving as if in prayer, though no sound ever passed them. Her eye, too, would sometimes wander round the room, as if in search of the one loved object; then close again unsatisfied. But towards the end of the day her lips ceased to move, her eye ceased to wander, her hand returned no feeble pressure, the clammy dew of death stole over her, her gentle spirit fled. Gracious Heaven! what were then my feelings! Bereft of all I loved—of both my hapless children—and left alone, a wretched, solitary being, without one ray of hope, one ray of comfort, to pierce the cloud of misery that enveloped me! My soul fainted within me, it sank in gloomy despondency; but my grief uttered

few complaints, despair had subdued my mind, and left it a prey to blank and dreary melancholy.

Quite borne down by this weight of misery, I long sat at the side of poor Nadejda's corpse, lost in stupid abstraction. The sudden pressure of grief had broken my spirit, had crushed the vigour of my intellect, and reason rested dubious on her seat. Hour after hour passed away, but still I sat unconscious of the surrounding scene; for each receding hour took with it some fragile property of the mind, and left it at length a void. I became forgetful even of the source of my affliction, and perfectly insensible to every thing around me. Even when they bore away the remains of poor Nadejda, to lay her in the grave with my unhappy son, I marked them not. I saw not the burning tapers, the long array of priests, and all the dark procession of the funereal train, though passing before my eyes; I heard not the dismal bell, the solemn chaunt, and joined not in the prayers, though present at it all; and when the earth was heaped upon her, it was to me as an empty show; reason had fallen from her seat—my intellect was gone.

For several weeks I continued in a state bordering on insanity; and might, perhaps, still have

remained so, but for the ceaseless care of the Archimandrite and the good Yakovich. They nursed me with a tenderness which knew no intermission, and watched over me with unwearied attention; preventing every circumstance that might augment my malady, and anxiously cherishing each glimmering of returning reason. By degrees the cloud which had obscured my mind was dispelled; I recovered to a full recollection of my dreadful loss, to a full perception of my forlorn condition, to a full sense of misery; but I recovered also to resignation, to calm submission to the will of Heaven.

The Archimandrite improving these good feelings by pious counsel, insensibly led back my mind to its former stability, nay, almost to its former cheerfulness; and I found in Dmetri a resting-place for my affections, which powerfully seconded the good man's endeavours for my happiness. The artless affection of the child was a source of great comfort to me when I again returned to my once happy home; for, being bereft of every other joy, he then engrossed my whole heart. Many long hours which, without him, would have been so many hours of protracted wretchedness, have I sat, fondly listening to the tones of his mother's voice renewed in his, and tracing in his tender

features the likeness of his father ; till, quite overcome by mournful recollections, I have burst into tears. But this is a weakness which seldom happens now ; the morbid acuteness of my feelings is worn away by time, and I can now bear to think of perished joys and former sorrows, as trials sent to remove my affections from the transitory objects of this world, and to fix them on a better.

Before Boulatoff had ceased to speak Dmetri and Natalia had long discontinued their dance, and the party was already beginning to disperse ; but those who had drawn near to listen to the story were so deeply interested by it, that their whole attention was fixed upon the narrative, and they did not remark how many of the guests had retired, or that it was quite time for the others to follow their example. Indeed, the interest of a few had been so much excited, that, forgetting how little tears were suited to a marriage feast, they even wept at the story of poor Nadejda's death, and stood some moments still fixed in deep attention, even after the voice of Boulatoff was no longer heard.

A few days after I had heard this affecting tale,

I bade a final adieu to my kind entertainers, and prepared to return once more to my native land, whence I had now been absent too long not to be anxious to revisit, with all speed, the spot which had given me birth; the spot which had so often smiled on me with happiness and pleasure, in the only days when happiness or pleasure is pure and unalloyed. But though I was so anxious to breathe again my native air, I took leave of my Cossack friends not without regret; for where one has experienced kindness one always feels attachment, and the friendly attentions shown me in that hospitable country had been most unwearied and sincere.

CHAPTER VIII.

As my road homewards, by way of Pultava, lay through Kiev, Boulatoff begged me to be the bearer of a memorial to the good Yakovich, who was still living there in the Monastery of Petcherski. The old Archimandrite who had been so kind and humane in his care of Vladimir, had died a few years afterwards, when Yakovich had succeeded him ; but, having in his turn grown old, he was now cut off from frequent intercourse with the world, by the infirmities of age, almost as much as by the seclusion of a monastic life. Nevertheless, opportunities were sometimes offered him of communicating with Boulatoff ; of which he always availed himself with the eagerness of one anxious to keep alive the feelings of former years. Boulatoff, on his part, was not less solicitous to find means of occasional intercourse with the man who had so large a claim upon his gratitude. Indeed, the interchange of kindnesses between them was equally agreeable to both ; for sympathy and esteem had as deeply impressed the heart of

Yakovich as gratitude had done that of Boulatoff. It was with considerable pleasure, therefore, that Boulatoff heard of my intention to pass through Kiev, as he knew I should be the willing bearer of whatever he might wish to send to his venerable friend ; and shortly before I left Tcherkask he entrusted to my care a small parcel of letters, with some few tokens from Dmetri and Natalia, begging me to deliver them into the hands of the Archimandrite. This I promised to do, and I was soon able to redeem my promise ; for, having bid adieu to my kind entertainers at Tcherkask, I once more resumed my journey with feelings of more than usual eagerness to bring it to a conclusion. I considered it as a reproach that the last request of my friend had remained so long unfulfilled ; and I was anxious to check the self-upbraidings which were beginning to assail me, by placing in the hands of his mother the ring he bequeathed her with his dying breath.

Wishing then to reach Pultava with all the despatch my health would admit, I set forwards in a small brichka, which a trusty Cossack engaged to take there with his three spirited little horses, in nearly as short a time as I could have gone by post. This mode of travelling, at all times independent, has peculiar advantages in the southern

districts of Russia, as it leaves the traveller at liberty to rest in any village that happens to look rather less desolate than such places generally do in most of those provinces, and gives him leisure to enjoy the full benefit of the necessaries he may have provided for the journey. For woe to the stranger who ventures to traverse that forbidding land, trusting to the common chances of the day for the supply of his daily wants. Should he be pinched with cold by the bleak winds that sweep over those barren steppes, he will obtain there no greater comfort than a fire of weeds and rushes, smoking in the corner of a mud-built cottage, whence it has no vent but through the fissures in the wall; should he be faint with hunger, black rye-bread, with brackish unwholesome water, are the best luxuries the wretched peasantry have there to offer; should he be weary, or be driven by the storm to seek for shelter, this he will rarely find, except in some dingy hovel where the light of day never penetrated through the thick clouds of smoke that circle round its roof—where his only resting-place will be a bench fixed to the wall, of which he may have to dispute possession with a strange assemblage of domesticated animals, dwelling there in common with the poor naked family. Nor is this picture too highly coloured. The

forests spread over the north of Russia furnish the contented peasants there both with materials to build comfortable cottages, and fuel to repel from their roofs the rigours of their dreary winter; whilst the land, irrigated by numberless springs and fountains, yields to their labour crops, scanty indeed, but more than enough to supply their wants. Not so in many of the southern provinces. No forests grow there to furnish wood for building or for fuel; and the cottages are there principally made of a coarse kind of basket-work, daubed over with mud, in which the cheerless wintry nights are warmed only with burning heaps of weeds, or the refuse of the stable yard. There, too, few springs or fountains fertilize the deep sandy soil; and even the cattle are, in many places, watered from the wells of brackish water, which scantily supply the villages with that first necessary of life. There, also, the famished peasant rarely gathers the fruit of his toil; but sees myriads of locusts reap the harvest he has sown—destroy his labours, and devastate his fields.

But enough of this;—sick at heart with seeing so much misery on my weary journey, I rejoiced at the prospect of its being speedily terminated, when I at length found myself in the vicinity of Pultava, and could descry, in the distance, the

column raised to commemorate the victory of the Immortal Peter over the "frantic Alexander of the North." In that neighbourhood was the habitation of my lamented friend's mother; and, eager to acquit myself of the duty I owed his memory, by delivering his last bequest to his mourning parent, I pressed onwards with all haste, and was very soon before its spacious entrance-court. It had, however, a deserted melancholy air, that seemed to denote the absence of its mistress; and I knocked doubtfully at the gate, scarcely knowing whether to expect to find there the object of my search or not. I knocked in vain; yet the half-closed door showed that the place was not quite forsaken, and tempted me to enter; when, after having passed, without encountering any part of the family, through the outer rooms, appropriated in Russian mansions to the domestics in attendance, I came to an inner one, hung round with crape, in which were several groups of persons, apparently in deep distress. Shocked at the idea of having obtruded myself, unbidden, into the house of mourning, I would have instantly retired; but was arrested by seeing, in the next chamber, the uncovered face of a female corpse lying on its funereal bier. The tapers burning at the head distinctly showed me

in that face the features of her I sought. Amazed, appalled, I stood there like some guilty wretch, rebuking myself with having neglected to fulfil the sacred mandates of my dying friend, until too late; with having wasted my hours in idle pleasures until, alas! tears and self-reproaches were the only offerings I could make to his memory, the only evidence of my truth.

The rest of the sad tale is quickly told—she had died of a broken heart. The loss of her son, her only child, had deprived her of the last prop of her declining age; and she was bowed with sorrow to the grave. For some time after the fatal news of her son's death had reached her, she, to appearance, bore her loss with unusual fortitude; for she was seldom heard to complain, seldom spoke of her affliction, and made no display of her sorrow. But grief was preying, in silence, on her heart; was, in secret, wearing away her health; and the feeling that she should quickly join her son in Heaven, gave her resignation to support, with apparent calmness, the few weary hours of remaining life. The only solace of that joyless interval was drawn from the recollection of the thousand acts of kindness which had endeared him to her more than even the ties of nature; or in

perusing some of the fond letters in which those kindnesses were recorded. Through the day she struggled to conceal her sufferings; but, in the deep solitude of the night, when others were buried in sleep, she freely indulged her grief. Then she would kneel for hours before the portrait of her son, in tears and prayer that she might soon be taken to him, or would read his letters again and again, until morning came to interrupt her sorrow. When, at length, she felt that her misery was drawing to a close, that the hand of death was guiding her to her wished-for home, she prepared for the event with a cheerfulness which had long been foreign to her heart; and, having given it as a last injunction that the letters and portrait, the cherished relics of her son, should be buried with her in the grave, she sank upon her pillow and closed her eyes for ever.

I remained to witness the mournful rites of sepulture performed over her, to bear a part in the sorrow of her friends; but, when that melancholy day was passed, I gladly hastened from the spot where I had felt the sting of self-reproach, to seek, in other scenes, occasion for more cheerful thoughts. Bending my way, therefore, towards Kiev, with redoubled diligence, in the hope of

executing Boulatoff's commission more happily than I had done the last, I had soon the pleasure of being welcomed by the good Archimandrite, Yakovich, as the bearer of pleasant tidings from his friend; when, with unaffected urbanity, he pressed me to become his guest. After a journey of considerable fatigue, I could not be unwilling to refresh myself with rest; but the mere want of repose did not form my only inducement for yielding to his entreaty, as I was glad of the opportunity of examining, at my leisure, the remarkable catacombs and excavations at Kiev; but, more especially, I was pleased with the idea of becoming better acquainted with the man I already venerated on the reputation of his good deeds. He was one of those few men, blessed by nature with habitual cheerfulness and equanimity; for neither had the severe habits of a monastic life been able to sour his temper, nor the pressure of age and infirmity to depress him. It was a cheerfulness founded on piety and resignation, and totally beyond the influence of the common accidents of life. It had, however, been proved by more than common accidents; his early course had been marked by more than common sorrow, and, though he had now regained, in the exercise of his pious duties, serenity and peace of mind, he had once been

bereft of both, and had been bowed almost to the grave by the heavy hand of affliction.

“ Mine has not been a life of constant sunshine,” said he to me, on an occasion when I had been envying his happy old age; “ though the evening of my day is unclouded and serene, a dark, a dreadful storm broke over its earlier hours. We all have our trials, mine have been severe; but, thank Heaven, I have been enabled to struggle through them, and have learned to be resigned. I have not always been, as you now see me, a secluded Monk; but once mingled actively in the world, devoted myself to its interests and pleasures: nor was I always the solitary being you now behold me, but was once both a husband and a father; was once bound to life by the ties of the tenderest affection, and made fond of existence by the endearments of the truest love. Ah! this hair was not always white, this frame not always withered, nor this heart always seared and blighted as it now is. But why do I revert to days I can think of only to bewail—why recall feelings I have long endeavoured to forget? The cloud has passed over me, I am now again in peace, and should be thankful.” Surprised and interested by what he had said, I longed to hear the particulars of his story; and, though I would not ask him to enter

into details which must be painful to him, my looks so evidently betrayed my wishes that he proceeded without entreaty.

“ It is but a small portion of my life,” said he, “ that has been devoted entirely to the service of religion ; my younger years were given to commerce, and, as a merchant, I visited many foreign countries. Among others, I went to your happy island, where I first became acquainted with my lost, lamented wife. I little thought when, for the sake of leaving the hurry of the Metropolis during some of the hottest days of summer, I determined to carry to her father a letter in which I was commended to his friendship, that I should find in his cottage a home for my wandering affections ; and, when strolling through his village on a bright sunny evening, I for the first time knocked carelessly at his humble door, I little expected to find there the fairest, loveliest being I had ever seen. Oh, Ellen ! never shall I forget thy mien of modest dignity and conscious worth, thy intelligent and playful smile, which won my early love ; nor ever cease in memory to cherish the solid virtues of thy mind.

“ It matters not now to tell how I gained her affections, to speak of the progress of our attachment, or recount the tender cares, the fond solici-

tude, which filled my time and thoughts until she became my wife. That anxious interval passed, the world did not possess two beings more completely happy. Pleased with each other, satisfied with our lot, cheerful and content, the days and years rolled quickly by, unmarked in their peaceful course by any change, excepting one, which gave us new delight: need I add, that this was no other than our becoming parents. We were blessed with two lovely children, a son and a daughter. You who have never been a father, will hardly guess how much such an event can add to the enjoyment even of a happy life; what a keen relish it can give to our other pleasures. Alas! it made me too fond of a world in which I then centred all my hopes.

“ In the course of a few years I had, by some successful speculations, realized sufficient fortune to give me independence in any country, but to place me in the rank of the most wealthy in my own; when, eager to return to the land of my fathers with the consideration that wealth always bestows, I converted my property into money, and embarked with my wife and children on board a vessel bound to one of the ports of my native country. In acceding to this arrangement, Ellen sacrificed to my wishes both her inclination and

all the strong attachments which tied her to the home of her earliest affections, but which, more especially, bound her to her aged father. Bitterly have I ever since reproached myself with having required so great a sacrifice ; with having torn her from the venerable old man in his latter days ; with having been the cause, alas ! of bringing his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.

“ We had not long beaten about in the stormy Baltic, when we were overtaken by a tempest far too furious to be resisted by our feeble vessel ; which soon became so mere a wreck, that we had no prospect of safety but in abandoning it. We hastened, then, as our last resource, to take to the boat ; which, being quickly lowered, Ellen, with my infant daughter, were safely received by the crew, who had first leaped into it, and I was in the act of letting down my boy, when the rope that held the boat to the vessel broke ; and neither the prayers, the tears, nor heart-rending cries of my distracted wife, could induce the men to venture again near the sinking ship. Thus I was left, with my poor boy, to my fate ; and, to all appearance, there could be but one fate for us both : the spray dashing over us as the shattered vessel rolled from side to side at the mercy of the waves,

seemed to warn us of the death we might expect. But in this extremity my presence of mind happily did not forsake me ; and, whilst commending my soul fervently to my Maker, I lashed both myself and my son to a loose piece of timber on the deck : scarcely had I accomplished it, when the wreck was swallowed in the deep. The log of wood, however, to which we were attached, supported us on the surface of the waves till we were providentially picked up by a Danish pilot-boat ; but we had then been so many hours in the water that the spark of life was almost extinct ; and, though warmth and animation were at last restored to my stiffened limbs and exhausted frame, my poor son only opened his eyes again on existence to bless me and expire. Shall I attempt to describe to you my sorrow, to pourtray the misery of a wretched father mourning his only son ; or will not your own feelings tell you what must have been my anguish. I was, indeed, wretched ; yet there was one bright hope, one consolatory thought which gave me some comfort even in that time of trouble ; the idea that my wife and daughter had been placed in probable safety before I was abandoned to my fate, had supported me in my struggle for life when buffet-

ing with the waves, and now comforted me in the hour of affliction, when bewailing my unhappy child.

“As soon as I had recovered a little from the shock given my strength by these repeated sufferings, I determined to return to England, in the persuasion that Ellen, believing me lost for ever, would hasten back to shelter her grief in the bosom of her aged father. I arrived in London, not as I had left it, the rich merchant, the happy parent, borne on buoyant hopes, and surrounded by all I loved; but a solitary beggared wanderer, lonely and wretched. I hastened to the cottage which had so often smiled for me with a cheerful welcome, which had so lately been enlivened by my Ellen’s soft accents, and her children’s playful laugh, mingling with their grandsire’s voice; but I found there no ready welcome, no playful laugh, all was then silent and cheerless as the grave. The cottage stood tenantless and void; no Ellen was there to gladden my return, no grandsire to rejoice at my escape.

“The news of our shipwreck had long preceded my arrival, followed by other accounts which left no hope that the boat had not shared the same dreadful fate; and the loss of his only daughter, his darling child, the prop of his age,

the sole comfort of his declining years, had broken the old man's heart, and had laid him joyless in the tomb. Often have I coveted his end; often have I wished to repose my weary head with him in the grave, and called on death to close my sufferings; but such release from woe was still denied me; I was reserved for yet greater trials, yet greater misery; the grief which broke his heart deprived me of reason.

“ Long after the height of this worst affliction of humanity had passed, and I was able to mix once more in the world, I still continued to be haunted with sounds and visions that existed only in my disordered mind: Ellen's heart-rending shrieks ever rang in my ears, vainly imploring me to snatch her from the waves; her father's dying form even lay before my eyes, reproaching me as the author of his misery. My rest was broken, my peace destroyed, my life rendered insupportable by these phantoms of a troubled brain; and, to fly from them, I wandered from country to country, seeking, in a constant change of scene, refuge from my distempered thoughts.

“ Led by the hope of finding in my native land the peace which shunned me wherever else I went, I had journeyed as far as Kiev towards the home I left in early youth, when I was attacked by a severe complaint, that brought me almost to the

grave. I believed myself passing to eternity, and at that awful moment the hand of death seemed to withdraw from before my mind the veil which had so long obscured my reason: other prospects opened to my view than those which had so long deluded me with imaginary terrors, other hopes than those which had so long driven me a wanderer through the world; and I vowed, if I recovered, to take off my thoughts and affections from the objects of this life, to devote the remainder of my existence to the service of my Maker, and seek in religion alone the consolation which I had so long pursued in vain. This good resolve acted as a charm to my sufferings; from that hour they gradually diminished. My spirits were tranquilized, my health returned, when, thankful for the change so happily effected in my hopes and feelings, I faithfully fulfilled my vow by becoming a brother in the religious order of which I am now the head. It is now thirty years since I first entered this holy institution; and thirty years of piety have taught me cheerful resignation, have given me serenity, have restored me to peace of mind."

The good Archimandrite here ended his affecting story; which had so deeply engaged my feelings and won my sympathy, that I scarcely could

withhold from it the tribute of a tear. The confidence he placed in me, by thus making me the depository of his former sorrows, was not the only instance I experienced of his regard ; for, notwithstanding the dissimilarity of our ages and general pursuits, he gave himself up almost entirely to my service whilst I remained his guest. Indeed, during that time he undertook to guide or direct my search in examining every thing at Kiev worthy of observation ; but, though there are in its vicinity many highly interesting objects, particularly the extensive catacombs, I found nothing to excite my curiosity more than the library of the monastery. It was replete with manuscripts and various extraordinary records ; some of them immensely valuable as historical documents, and others, perhaps, more interesting, though of less price, containing principally the annals of the monastery, or anecdotes of persons connected with it. Among the latter I found one small manuscript written in the old Russian dialect, and considerably injured by time. I do not now recollect by what accident I was induced to single it out from among so many for particular examination, or why, finding myself unable to decipher it easily, I thought it worth while to beg the Archimandrite's assistance. When, however, I showed it to him,

he immediately recognised it as the private history of a Monk who had ended his days at the monastery before Kiev was reconquered by the Russians, and whilst it still formed a part of the kingdom of Poland. He added, that tradition reported it to be in the hand-writing of the Monk, and that it was found under his mattress after death.

This account, by exciting my curiosity, determined me to go on with the labour of deciphering it. Though the task was not very easy, with the aid of the Archimandrite I was soon able to accomplish it, and the entertainment it afforded me amply compensated my trouble; indeed, it contained some touches of feeling, together with a few incidents which pleased me so greatly, that I transcribed the whole manuscript; and I even now sometimes find so much amusement in looking over the story of the Monk of Petcherski, that I am induced to hope you also, gentle reader, may be able to wile away an idle hour agreeably in perusing it.

The first few leaves of the manuscript had been rendered perfectly illegible by age and damp. These probably contained the early history of the Monk, for the first page or two that I was able to decipher refer only to the days of his childhood; but, as they do not appear to be much connected

with the principal events of the story, I shall omit them and begin the narrative where he is entering upon a scene which influenced the remainder of his life.

THE MONK OF PETCHERSKI.

— The famine continued to rage with undiminished fury. Mosco and the surrounding country were already rendered a scene of perfect desolation. Nothing was to be seen but objects of misery and horror; figures more like spectres than men stalking through the streets in hopeless search of relief, extending their hands to implore succour, and dying even in the act. So terrible were their sufferings, that mothers, driven to madness by hunger and despair, were known to feed on the flesh of their own perished infants; and fathers to devour, in equal phrenzy, the bodies of their dead sons. The rites of sepulture, too, were often violated, and corpses torn from their graves to be disputed with the wolves by dying wretches; even human life was not always respected; and some men fell victims to the starved ferocity of others; that their flesh might furnish a monstrous feast to satisfy the cravings of hunger. The hand of famine

seemed to have destroyed all the charities of life, to have pulled down the whole fabric of society, and driven men to one common gulf of despair and madness. Through the whole city nothing could be seen but sights shocking to humanity, disgusting and appalling to the mind; nothing could be heard in the almost desert streets but the lamentations of misery, the howlings of madness, or the cries of despair.

Crowds of starved and dying wretches thronged the courts and choked the avenues of the palace, calling day and night on the Czar Boris Godonov to give them food; but the Czar was then powerless to relieve their wants, and impotent to punish their offences. His treasures had been exhausted in largesses to the people; the public stores and granaries had been emptied for their use; and the soldiers, who, had they been present, might, perhaps, have maintained some order in the town, were scattered through the country to check the devastations of the robber Khlopko. This man, at the head of an immense band of ferocious marauders, collected and united by the misery of the times, found himself sufficiently strong to contend with the troops of the Czar, and to cut off the supplies sent for our relief from distant parts of the kingdom.

War and famine brought in their train pestilence and death. A raging plague passed over Mosco, and swept away thousands of wretches whom famine had spared. The terror of disease added, if possible, to the horrors which previously reigned ; for friends would fly from friends, and brothers shun brothers in their dying moments, fearing that with their last sigh they might inhale the blast of death. Yet in this scene of desolation, of suffering, and crime, a ray of virtue sometimes shone forth to show that all were not ferocious, that all were not selfish, that all had not lost the feelings of humanity in the sense of their own wants and miseries, but that charity and benevolence could still maintain their power over the hearts of some, even in that abode of crime and horrors ; that even there a few good men might still be found, who forgot their own sufferings in pity for the misery of others ; whose breasts glowed with humanity, and whose actions were guided by virtue.

Amongst those who were active in the cause of charity in this season of distress, not one was more conspicuous either for piety or eminence than my good master, the Metropolitan of Rostoff. Not only was he individually strenuous to do good, but he also commanded me, his servant, to

suspend my occupations as secretary, and, after his example, to devote myself wholly to the care of the wretched; to lay aside my books and implements of writing, and employ myself in carrying succour to the distressed, in searching out the haunts of virtuous misery, in speaking comfort to the disconsolate, and in relieving their wants. For the latter purpose he supplied me abundantly from his private stores, and gave me free access to his treasures.

He could not have put me on a more pleasing duty, or one more congenial with my feelings, for I was naturally fearless and compassionate; I had no dread of the pestilence which was raging through the city, and I felt delight in being able to administer to the sufferings of the wretched. I undertook the office, therefore, with alacrity, and I laboured in it with active zeal; seeking out the most obscure hovels as the abode of the greatest misery, and hastening to the relief of whatever object I could learn to be most distressed and most deserving.

But my good intentions were frequently anticipated; another had frequently preceded me in the work of charity. If I hastened to some poor hut to speak consolation to a dying mother, or give bread to her starving children, it often happened

that an administering angel had gone before me; if I entered the dwelling of wretchedness to raise the drooping head of despairing age, to bring hope to the comfortless or peace to the broken-hearted, the same good spirit had preceded me; if I went to the habitation of want and sickness to give sustenance to the famished, or to cool the fevered lips of some delirious sufferer, I often found that the same benevolent being had ventured before me into the region of pestilence; had dared to breathe the tainted air of infection, for the sake of calling back hope to the disconsolate, or of giving the means of strength to the weak and fainting. Into whatever scene of distress I entered, I generally found that the Countess Romanoff had been previously there to comfort and relieve. The name of Marina Romanoff was on every tongue, coupled with praise and benedictions; children lisped it in their prayers, and their parents, with tears of gratitude, would speak of her as their protecting saint; for she it was who had glided before me from house to house, like a spirit of peace, to still the cryings of despair and soothe the voice of misery; she it was who had preceded me in the path of charity, and whose active benevolence had so often anticipated my good intentions.

I longed to behold her; though I had heard her praises from so many mouths, it was only by her praises that I knew her; it had never been my chance to meet her. But at length I was more fortunate, and, when I had almost abandoned the expectation, I one day met her in a house of mourning. How like an angel of light she looked, giving hope and consolation to the despairing and broken-hearted!—so young, so lovely, and yet so little occupied with the common cares of youth and beauty, that her whole soul seemed devoted to the wants and distresses of others! I thought I had never beheld any thing half so heavenly.

It was in a poor widow's cottage that we first met; the father had fallen a victim to famine; he denied himself all food to supply his young children with one scanty morsel more, and died; the elder sons had been swept away by the raging pestilence, and the mother was left starving, absolutely starving, with two dead children in the house, and two more almost in the agonies of death. They were dying of hunger, and she had not a morsel of any thing to give them, nor the means of getting it. Her only hope was that death might soon relieve their sufferings, and that she might follow them. I learned the particular distresses of this family by mere accident, for, previous to the

public calamities, it had been in good circumstances, and each individual preferred to sink out of life in secret, rather than to join in the clamours or outrages of the mob, and add reproach to their other miseries.

As soon as I heard of their extreme suffering, I hastened to them with a supply of food and other necessities; but I again failed to be the first in bringing relief. Marina was already there, administering to their wants; she had already banished from the poor widow and her orphans the fear of instant death—had wiped away their tears—had taught them to look towards the future with better hopes. When I entered the squalid chamber, she rose from the bench on which she was sitting, and having said a few kind words to the widow, retired, followed by her old servant Marpha. I stood silent and confused; a crowd of such unusual feelings thronged my breast, that I could scarcely answer her passing salutation.

At length, then, I had seen her; and who that had ever seen a being so surpassing in beauty, so excelling in every virtue, could give a thought to any other object?—I could not. In the confused tumult of my feelings, the purport of my errand was quite forgotten; I stood unconsciously gazing on the spot where I first had seen her, until the

feeble voice of the widow recalled my recollection ; and even then, in giving the poor woman the bread and wine I had brought, my questions were not respecting her wants or misfortunes, but about Marina.

I returned to the same cottage the next day and the day following, in the hope of once more beholding the object of my secret adoration ; but it was not until after many successive visits that we met again, and, in the interval, anxiety and painful thoughts had been my sole companions. Marina on that day entered the gloomy chamber soon after I had arrived there, and the kindness and condescension with which she then greeted me, completed the delirium of my senses ; but still the difference of our rank was so great, that I could only dare speak to her with the respectful distance of her servant. To have raised my hopes higher than to be regarded as an inferior would at that time have been madness ;—to have allowed my lips to give utterance to the feelings of my heart would have driven her from my sight for ever ; for she was of the illustrious house of Romanoff, one of the most powerful among the Muscovite nobility, while I was without a name and without a home, a child of misfortune, bred up by charity, and supported by my daily labour.

When the monk Bazalia first came to the monastery of Tchudeff at Moscow for the purpose of taking the cowl, he had with him an infant boy, whom, he said, he had brought from Poland; adding that the child had been given him by a poor woman in her dying moments, who implored him in charity to take care of her helpless orphan. The archimandrite, pleased with the child, allowed Bazalia to keep him in the monastery. As he grew older, and his mind developed itself, he appeared to be gifted with a degree of talent which many of the monks thought so extraordinary that they took pains to cultivate it; but they were, perhaps, won to this labour by the good temper of the child, as much as by their admiration of his ready understanding and retentive memory. Under their instruction, he made a rapid progress in all the learning of the day, and the reputation of his acquirements spread even beyond the precincts of the monastery. Though rejected by fortune, nature had been bountiful to him; not only had she bestowed on him strength of intellect, but had also cast him in her fairest mould, and given him, with a graceful person, manners superior to his station. The Metropolitan heard of his good report, and sent for him to the palace to fill the humble office of secretary; for he had by that time

grown to man's estate, and it was necessary he should leave the asylum which had protected his childhood, that he might, by his learning, endeavour to gain a name. Need I say I was that infant, and am that man? or need I add that even the extravagance of passion could not drive from my mind a recollection of the immense distance which separated the poor nameless orphan from the heiress of the great Romanoff? This was a reflection which tortured my soul with every depressing, every agonizing feeling; and when in her presence, I stood before her dejected and confused.

But these painful thoughts did not long continue to oppress me; other hopes and other ideas came to cheer my despondency, which, banishing for a moment the recollection of every subject of regret, gave me a transient feeling of perfect happiness; for, after her second visit at the widow's cottage, the chances which had so long prevented our earlier meeting, though we were both pursuing the same path, seemed now to throw us constantly together. To whatever object her benevolent care was directed, I was attracted by a secret impulse to the same; when, by degrees, the reserve which had at first obstructed our free interchange of kindnesses was worn away. Each day she ap-

peared to regard me with increasing approbation, and each day I lost something of the dejection which was weighing down my mind, till at length we met with the familiarity of tender friends—of friends?—of something more than friends—I could not be deceived; Marina loved me!

The delirium of happiness excited by this discovery was but of short duration; it was quickly changed for wretchedness that knew no comfort. Marina was about to be taken from my sight, and I was no more to meet her, no more to hear the soft accents of her voice, no more to hang with rapture on her looks. It was a misery I was not prepared to encounter, and it threw me into despair.

CHAPTER IX.

THE famine which had so long made Moscow a scene of horrors and desolation began to diminish. The troops of the Czar had slain the robber Khlopko in a fierce engagement, and had beaten and dispersed his formidable bands; the supplies destined for the relief of the city being no longer intercepted by these banditti, the sufferings of the people were greatly lessened. At the same time, many of the nobles, who had been driven from their estates by the disturbed and dangerous state of their neighbourhood to seek for greater security in Moscow, now resolved again to leave the place where they had only sights of misery and outrage before their eyes, and return to their possessions in the country. Amongst those who adopted this resolution, the Count Romanoff was one of the earliest. He could not endure to remain longer than necessity compelled him in a city, where he had been made a sharer in the worst calamity, the severest scourge, that can afflict a people; and he therefore desired his daughter to prepare herself to accompany him to his estate.

Marina communicated this intelligence to me in a way which plainly told me her heart was not less deeply interested than mine—which plainly showed me the sincerity of her affection and the poignancy of her grief. “If,” said she, and tears almost choked her utterance as she spoke, “if we must never be united, and I know but too well we never may, no other shall ever receive my faith, no other ever occupy my thoughts, but for your sake I will devote to the seclusion of a convent, a life which will now be without pleasure and without hope.” This assurance, though an evidence of her constancy and truth, was but a slight alleviation to my misery, for it could not give me a hope I should ever see her more, ever again press her to my heart, or again hear her vows of constant love ; and I parted from her in despair, almost in madness.

I had not sufficient fortitude to repel this shaft of fortune ; the fond illusions in which I had been indulging had subdued the tone of my mind, had destroyed the buoyancy of my spirits, and I yielded without an effort to the full influence of despair. The dejection and misery which preyed upon me unceasingly very soon undermined my health and strength. I became incapable of every occupation ; a slow fever consumed my days and

nights, and I felt that I was hastening to my grave.

The good Metropolitan saw that I was sinking under some secret grief, and, pitying my sufferings, he endeavoured by unusual kindness to give me consolation. But pity and consolation were lost upon me; they could not dry the source of sorrows such as mine, nor could they give hope to a mind so despairing. He saw that his kindness was of no avail, that mine was a disease which required other remedies, a grief which required other comforters, and he yielded to my entreaties of being allowed to return once more to the monastery of Tchudoff, trusting that I should find both remedy and comforter with the good men who had fostered me in infancy. But I only wished to return again amongst them, that I might spend my last moments with those who had cherished my early years.

The good men welcomed me with the kindness of fathers, for they really loved me, each regarding me as the child of his affection; and when my fever became more alarming, they prayed for me, and watched over me by day and night; but their kindness was given to one who soon could not feel it, and their prayers were made for one who was not conscious of them.

In my visits to some of the retreats of misery and disease in Moscow, I had imbibed the infection of the pestilential fever then raging with extreme virulence among the poorest classes; but it lay dormant in my constitution until called into action by the influence of grief. Very soon after my return to the monastery, it increased upon me with great violence, becoming hourly more and more severe, till at length assuming every symptom of malignancy, it reduced me to extremity. Whilst lying delirious and insensible, it was thought each moment would be my last; happily, however, the care and simple remedies of my kind attendants seconded so well the natural vigour of my constitution that I struggled through it; the fever abated, the delirium subsided, and sleep, which had long forsaken me, again returned. These favourable symptoms gave a promise of returning health, and in a few days more, I was raised from the bed of sickness.

When the fever had so far left me that I was able once more to see and recognise my friends, I looked around in vain for Bazalia; I could not but remark his absence, as I had seen him watching by me unceasingly until I became insensible. Evasive answers were returned to all my inquiries, nor could I induce any one to give me a hint of

what was become of him, until I was convalescent. They would not unfold the mystery sooner, fearing I had not strength to bear a sudden access either of joy or sorrow; but when they saw my recovery so far established as to be placed beyond the danger of a relapse, the Archimandrite disclosed a tale which had power to change the whole colour of my fate.

Bazalia, he said, had watched over me during the violence of my fever with an anxiety which left him no repose; he had never for an instant quitted my side, and seemed to mark each fresh indication of danger with a degree of agitation that was quite extraordinary. Continuing to breathe so unceasingly the contagious air of my room, he soon became its victim, but still he remained near me, even when his veins were burning with fever, and refused to take any thought for himself. But at length he grew so much worse that he could no longer move about, and was compelled to throw himself on his couch, from whence he never rose. The disease in him ran a rapid course, for the perturbed state of his mind gave it a degree of violence that his broken constitution had no strength to withstand. A short time before he expired, he sent for the Archimandrite to receive his confession, who hastened to him with pious zeal,

standing between himself and princely power, he meditated a crime too monstrous to think of; for though he had curbed his impatience for his brother's death until after the birth of the child, yet when a son was born, and a fresh obstacle thus placed between him and the power he coveted, his worst passions received a new impulse, and he conceived the horrid design of hastening their death by poison.

“ In this dreadful scheme he had in me but too ready a coadjutor. I was his servant, his confidential servant, and had imbibed from him a contempt of every law human or divine. To such a master I was an useful servant; he knew that I was corruptible, and he kept me near him as a willing agent in his secret machinations; but he did not know how far, how very far, I was gone in sin, for I had never yet been guilty of another's blood, and he at first hesitated to make me a partner in his projected crime. His hesitation, however, only delayed the fatal deed; he at length placed before me heaps of gold, and at the price of gold I sold myself to be his instrument in murder. Oh! that I could forget it, that I could blot out the memory of the crime, and die in hope—but conscience ever holds before me the poisoned goblet, crying, “ Remember and tremble.” I do

remember, I do tremble ;—hopeless despair racks my soul—terror, distraction, rend my dying thoughts.

“ The prince swallowed without mistrust the poison which I mingled with his wine. Its operation was slow, but certain ; he died a few days after, and the authors of his death escaped suspicion. Smirnoi, clothing his looks in grief, played so well the part of sorrow that even Aphanasia believed its truth. He delayed the perpetration of the second crime for several months, that he might the more surely turn from himself surmises and suspicion ; but when the time arrived which he thought suited his purpose, he again urged me to become his instrument, and again I sold him my seeming acquiescence. It was, however, in this instance only a seeming acquiescence ; my thirst for gold did that which my fear of Heaven had not done, and saved me from a second murder. I believed that if I could conceal, instead of destroying, the child of Roman, it would be the means of holding Smirnoi in perpetual fear, and of making him freely share with me his ill-acquired wealth. To accomplish this object I had recourse to a cruel and wicked stratagem ; I procured a dead infant, laid it on Aphanasia’s bed, and set the room on fire. Before the flames could be

extinguished, the little corpse was half consumed; the effects of the fire had so disfigured it that it could scarcely be recognised as the remains of a human being, and it was mourned over as the child of Roman. I took advantage of the confusion caused by the flames, to steal away with the real child, and place him in the hands of Volkhova, a woman who lent herself to my purpose.

“ My exultation in the success of my crime was of no long duration. The circumstance of a fire having taken place in Aphanasia’s room was sufficient to give Smirnoi a suspicion that I had betrayed him, and suspicion of that nature could not be entertained without exposing me to the worst effects of his wrath. Thus the very means I had adopted for my security might have led to my destruction, had not something in his altered look and manner made me mistrust him. The consciousness of guilt strengthening my fears, I hastened to fly from his vengeance; but resolving, even in exile, to retain a hold upon him, I took with me the child of Roman Brianski.

“ In my flight, my steps were directed by accidental circumstances towards Moscow; and when there, I entered the monastery of Tchudoff with a view at first only of temporary shelter and security.

Whilst I was in that abode of piety I first learned to think. The daily devotional exercises in which I was obliged to join, with the examples of piety and benevolence perpetually before my eyes, deeply affected me, and made me seriously reflect on the strong contrast they formed with what I had hitherto seen and hitherto practised. I could not but observe that those around me appeared to enjoy continual peace and tranquillity of mind, whilst I was suffering all the torments of a reproaching conscience. If I inquired whence this difference arose, the answer was so obvious that I could not be mistaken. The base passions which had so long robbed me of all good feeling, of every good principle, and had so long been the only guides of my thoughts and conduct, then appeared in their true nature; their whole deformity was unmasked, and I despised myself for having been their slave.

“ These reflections effected a great change in my mind, determining me to abandon for ever a world in which I had borne so bad a part, and hide my crimes and misery in a cloister. I hoped that in the service of religion I might be able to atone, in some measure, for my past offences, and obtain mercy at the last awful day. That dread day is now arrived, my dying hour is come, yet I expir

without a hope ; conscience still reproaches me that my repentance was not complete—that mine has been an unprofitable regret, which deserves not the name of penitence—that the fear of man's reproaches has prevented me from making the only atonement in my power, by confessing to the world the sin I dreaded not to commit in the sight of Heaven. Alas ! I shrank from the idea of declaring myself a murderer to those who esteemed me void of guilt, and even in dying, I still dread to confess to them my crime ; I even yet dare not speak my guilt, though the hand of death is on me ; but, in the painful intervals of reason which fever and remorse have left me, I have endeavoured to set it down in writing, that the writing may remain a lasting testimony of my crime, my penitence, my despair, and that it may afford to the injured son of Brianski the means of recovering his stolen name and honours."

The perusal of this document acted as a charm to my senses, and as a cordial to my soul. It gave me new life, new hope ; raised me from the wretchedness in which a reflection on my forlorn state had sunk me, to show me in prospect every blessing that can charm existence. I was no longer the nameless orphan, the friendless child of poverty, doomed to toil in servitude for scanty

bread, to mourn in secret a hopeless passion ; but the son of noble parents, the heir of an illustrious name, which might claim equality even with that of Romanoff, which would place me in a rank not inferior to Marina. The despondency which had oppressed my spirits, the misery which had subdued my mind, the sickness which had nearly sunk me in the grave, were all forgotten in the feeling of renovated hope ; whilst all past sorrows, all past sufferings, were lost in the bright prospect of future happiness.

Glowing with fond anticipations, and all the impatience of youthful love, I hastened to the father of Marina, showed him the precious document, told him my eventful story, and made him the arbiter of my fate. The good Archimandrite confirmed my tale, and Marina seconded my prayers. How fearfully did I watch Romanoff's looks, how anxiously did I listen for his words, in that moment of suspense when his mind seemed wavering in doubt, questioning the evidence of his senses, yet wishing to believe ; but when his doubts were removed, when no longer hesitating to believe that the happiness of Marina was involved in mine, he blessed me as his future son :—with what transport did I catch his words, with what fervour did I answer to his blessing ! My heart overflowed

with tender feelings, and tears of grateful pleasure bore witness to their truth. The question of happiness was no longer doubtful; my dearest wishes were to be realized, my fondest desires to be accomplished, and I could now contemplate the chances of the coming hour without much anxiety or fear. For though Romanoff still refused to make Marina irrevocably mine until he should have received from Poland a confirmation of certain portions of Bazalia's story, this caution gave me no alarm. I felt a secret conviction that the confirmation he required would not long be wanting, nor my happiness be long delayed, since the Archimandrite, who had ever interested himself for me with the kindness of a parent, undertook to make secret inquiries to that end in the Palatinate of Sandomir. He immediately despatched thither one of the monks, on whose prudence he could rely, and to whom he intrusted this secret commission, though he ostensibly sent him on an affair connected with the interests of his monastery. Arrived in Poland, the Monk soon discovered that Smirnoi had really once possessed a confidential servant named Bazalia, who disappeared shortly after the fire which was supposed to have destroyed the son of Roman Brianski; and that Smirnoi's emissaries had tracked his course to

Moscow, at which place all traces of him were lost. He found, moreover, that the widow of Roman was still alive, and that she had retired to the convent of the Ascension at Grodno, to avoid the importunities of Smirnoi, who wished her to become his wife. Towards Grodno, therefore, the Monk then directed his steps, where he soon arrived ; and, in his religious character, he had no difficulty in obtaining an interview with Aphanasia. When she learned the purport of this visit, the tumult of her feelings knew no controul, and she yielded to them for some time without restraint ; but, as soon as their first violence had subsided, and she had found relief in tears, she declared that many circumstances had led her to mistrust the truth and honour of Smirnoi, and to suspect he had played a cruel treacherous part with her son and husband ; that the unaccountable disappearance of Bazalia had strengthened those suspicions, which the subsequent conduct of Smirnoi towards her had confirmed. But, she added, that, having been unable to obtain such decisive evidence of his guilt as might lead to his exposure and punishment, she had, to shun his importunities and screen herself from his vengeance, retired for peace and safety to a convent. Then, drawing from her bosom part of a broken cross of singular

workmanship, she said, "this is a part of the cross which, in conformity with the custom of our church, was hung round the neck of my child when he was baptized. No one, professing our faith, will ever divest himself of the cross so received; and, if that which Alexei wears corresponds with this portion, which I broke from it when suspicion first entered my mind, I receive him as my son with all the joy that can fill a mother's breast; whilst I bless the heavenly Providence which, protecting him in suffering and danger, has given him at last to his mother's prayers. Take it, I trust it to your care, for there is that in my heart which tells me I am not deceived, and that I shall again behold my son."

The Monk treasured in his memory all he had heard, and kept the fragment of the cross with religious care until he again entered the monastery of Tchudoff; towards which place he delayed not to bend his course, for the object of his mission was now attained. During his absence I had remained with the Archimandrite; and, though the good man endeavoured to soothe my impatience by every effort of persuasive kindness, yet the days seemed ages, so painful is the endurance of "hope deferred." But if, in his absence, my thoughts were wearied with uncertainty and con-

jecture, in his return I found a subject of delight, which more than repaid me for all the irksome hours I had passed. He brought with him such a confirmation of Bazalia's confession, that even incredulity could no longer doubt; for on my neck I wore the corresponding piece of the broken cross trusted by Aphanasia to his care. With what an ecstasy did I draw the fragment from my bosom, and place the pieces together! No eye could be mistaken,—the form, the workmanship, were all peculiar, and they exactly corresponded.

Elated with joy at this discovery, I hastened with the Archimandrite and the Monk to the father of Marina; and the proofs which had confirmed my sanguine anticipations removed every shade of doubt and hesitation from his mind. He could not refuse belief to the testimony which the Monk gave to Bazalia's truth and my identity; and, embracing me, he said, "the injured child of an illustrious father shall never be denied my protection and support, nor is the son of Brianski unworthy the daughter of Romanoff." Then, leading me to Marina, he gave her to my fond embrace, adding, "take her, she is yours; and let the virtuous feelings which first drew your hearts together, keep them ever united in happiness and peace." What words can express the ecstasy,

what language can convey an idea of the rapture, which thrilled through my soul as he spoke? Scarcely could I hear him to the end; my senses were bewildered by excess of pleasure; the transports of unbounded happiness almost confused my reason. I clasped Marina to my heart, I kissed Romanoff's hands, and gave vent to my feelings in exclamations of thankfulness and joy.

But when these first emotions had subsided, and I became again sufficiently composed to deliberate on the means to be pursued for obtaining a restitution of my name and hereditary honours, Romanoff urged that I should present a memorial to the Czar, containing a detail of my wrongs, with a petition for his support in advancing my demands of justice. In furtherance of this object, Romanoff accompanied me to the presence of the Czar on a day of public audience; as on such occasions he was accustomed to hear the complaints and redress the grievances of his people, in the midst of all the pomp and splendour of his Court.

As we approached the palace, we found the courts and squares connected with it crowded with the guard, formed of soldiers of various nations, each bearing the arms, and habited in the costume peculiar to his country. Bashkirs, Khirghises, Cal-

muks, and Tartars, whose spears and bows, dresses of fur and barbarous air, contrasted strongly with the splendid appearance of the Russian Strelitzes; the Poles and Germans, habited in fine cloth of brilliant colours, and carrying arms ornamented with gold and silver. Having passed through this varied assemblage of troops, we entered the palace, and proceeded along a suite of magnificent apartments, in which the principal citizens (many of them venerable old men, whose white beards reached to their breasts, and all clothed in kaptans, richly embroidered with gold,) were assembled with the Dvorian,* whose duty it is to attend the Czar on state occasions, and wait upon him in his hours of privacy. We remained in these apartments until our turn arrived to be summoned to the presence of the Czar; when we were ushered into the hall of audience, in which there reigned a profound and impressive silence. Around it were seated the Boyars and other illustrious persons, whose velvet dresses were almost concealed by the abundance of gold and jewels; the Patriarch, the Metropolitan, and other ecclesiastical dignitaries, dressed in their pontifical robes, being seated on the right of the throne. This, formed of

* Inferior nobility.

massive silver, was raised several steps from the ground; and the Czar, clothed in robes, rendered oppressive by the weight of costly ornaments, and wearing the pyramidical crown, which shone with a profusion of inestimable jewels, reclined on it in all the splendour of pride and pomp; whilst two young nobles of exalted rank, the immediate guards of his person, stood at his feet, dressed in robes of ermine, and carrying each a silver hatchet, suspended from his shoulders by a chain of gold. Romanoff and myself prostrated ourselves before the throne, and presented our memorials, which, being taken by an officer appointed for that purpose, were enveloped in a cloth of gold, and laid in silence at the feet of the Czar, who said, "If your petition is just it shall be granted;" then waved with his hand a sign that we should retire.

From this scene of heartless pride and fatiguing pomp, I gladly returned to the quiet pleasures of private life; where, in the society of Marina, I found a constant charm, an unwearying delight, whilst the hours and days glided swiftly by in the anticipation of that happy moment which should make us for ever one. Content in each other's love, we little cared for wealth and splendour; and only regretted that it should be necessary still to defer, for a time, the consummation of our wishes. For cus-

tom, which with the Russians has almost the force of law, required that the marriages of the great should be celebrated with a splendour corresponding with their rank, and, to make the requisite preparations for a display suitable to our high birth, demanded a short delay; but, as soon as these tedious arrangements were completed, no further obstacle being opposed to our impatient hopes, Romanoff gave Marina to me, to be for ever mine.

My feelings, in that blessed hour, no heart can guess; Heaven only knows their measureless ecstasy, and Heaven only knows how powerful they are, even in recollection, to subdue the heart to tenderness. The memory of them, even now, can sometimes soften me to tears—can sometimes lend a charm to the gloomy sadness of my cell—though happiness and I have long been strangers, though sorrow has long since broken my spirit, and the pleasures of this world have long ceased to please; even now, though bowed down by age and misery, I can sometimes retrace with delight the feelings of that season of youth, and love, and joy, or revive in my memory many circumstances of its brightest moments; I can yet see Marina, lovely and gentle as I first beheld her, like an angel of peace, binding up the sorrows of the broken-

hearted, and giving consolation to the wretched ; I can yet see her beautiful and happy as in that blissful hour when she knelt blushing at the altar, and pledged me her faith in purity and truth, whilst Heaven seemed opening for us its treasured joys, and each moment teemed with new delights ; and oh, misery ! I yet behold her lying on the bed of sickness—stretched on the bed of death. Oh ! Marina, Marina ! the recollection breaks my heart. When will my sufferings end ; when shall I cease to mourn and cease to weep ; when shall I forget my miseries in death, and join thy blessed spirit, “ where sighs are not heard nor tears seen ? ” Oh ! speak peace and consolation to my broken spirit ; tell me I shall not always weep, not always mourn ; tell me that in Heaven there is rest from sorrow, that there we shall meet to part no more ; and oh ! teach me to tread the path which thou hast trodden, in humble resignation, as thou hast done.

Shortly after my marriage, Romanoff proposed to accompany me, with Marina, to Poland ; that I might denounce Smirnoi as a fratricide and a treacherous guardian, and make a formal demand of justice at the court of Sigismund. I was provided with every necessary document and proof to establish my claims ; and, amongst other things, it

was arranged that my mother should remove from the convent of the Ascension to Warsaw, for the purpose of confirming my testimony, and publicly acknowledging me as her son. I had never seen my mother from my infancy ; I knew not what it was to feel a mother's kindness, to be cherished by a mother's love ; yet there is that in the name of parent which ever claims the tenderness of the child, and I fondly anticipated the hour when I should first throw myself at her feet, first hear her blessing ; I looked for our meeting as a source of unalloyed happiness, and I thought with delight of the pleasing task of nursing my mother's declining years, of soothing her afflictions. But, alas ! these grateful anticipations were never realized ; the arts of Smirnoi traversed all my plans, destroyed all my hopes, and plunged me into a deep abyss of misery.

In consequence of my marriage having been protracted by the circumstances already mentioned, Smirnoi had become acquainted with my history, through public report, long before I was prepared to undertake the journey into Poland. He foresaw the disgrace and punishment which must overwhelm him, should I be able to prosecute uninterruptedly my designs ; and his only

hope of safety he knew would be in my destruction. This, however, he would not venture to attempt by means of an assassin's dagger, because it would have been too evident to the world that his hand must have directed the blow; and he was further dissuaded from so open a course by Danilo, a trusted, but unworthy servant of Romanoff, in whom he had found both a counsellor and willing agent to his purpose. At this man's instigation Smirnoi, by immense bribes and greater promises, bought Clechnin, a nobleman of infamous character, to accuse the Romanoffs of a conspiracy against the life of the Czar; well knowing that, as the Romanoffs were nearly related to the late reigning family, an accusation of this nature would be credited even on questionable evidence. The circumstance of Romanoff being the Cravtchei,* offered facilities to such an accusation which no other office could have presented; for, as one of the principal duties of the Cravtchei consisted in examining the viands to be served at the table of the Czar, Danilo proposed to mix with them some poisonous herbs, which, when discovered, would, he thought, confirm

* Inspector of the imperial household.

Clechnin's accusation. Smirnoi adopted Danilo's plan the more eagerly, as he foresaw I should be implicated with the Romanoffs; and because it was almost as essential for his security that the father of Marina should be ruined as that I should fall.

CHAPTER X.

THE whole of this wicked plot was laid with so much secrecy, that neither Romanoff nor any of his friends had the least intimation or suspicion of the danger which threatened them; and were thus exposed to the fury of the Czar, when totally unprepared with any means of unmasking the falsehood of their accusers, or providing for their own safety. Romanoff had gone to pay his homage to the Czar, on the day preceding that on which we were to have commenced our journey to Poland; but scarcely had he entered the hall of audience, when Clechnin, advancing from among the other assembled nobles, impeached him of a conspiracy against the life of their sovereign. Confounded and astonished at so atrocious a charge, Romanoff stood for a few seconds immoveable and silent, doubting the evidence of his senses, and hardly able to believe he had heard correctly; till he found himself standing alone in the centre of the hall, and saw that the other courtiers shrank from his side, as if dreading by contact to be im-

plicated in his disgrace. But, strong in innocence, this rather moved his indignation than his fear, and he boldly defied his accusers, retorting on them the charge of falsehood and treachery; then, throwing himself on his knees before the Czar, implored he might not be condemned without proof, on the unfounded accusations of enemies. The Czar remained silent; and it was evident, from his looks, that suspicion had taken firm possession of his mind.

Romanoff was still on his knees, and the silence which followed his appeal to the Czar had not been broken, when Clechnin, again advancing, asserted he could, on the instant, substantiate his accusation by the strongest evidence; and begged that the testimony of Danilo, the confidential servant of Romanoff, might be heard in confirmation of the charge. To this request the Czar assented, and Danilo was immediately brought into his presence; where, after a feigned show of terror and hesitation, he detailed the particulars of a pretended plot, in which, he said, he had been compelled by fear, and the threats of his master, unwillingly to take a part; but that as he had joined it in fear, he had, from the first, determined to reveal the whole, as soon as he could do so without danger from his master's vengeance. He

added, that I was implicated in the same conspiracy; and that the poisonous herbs mingled with the viands for the Czar's use, had been mixed with them at the express command of Romanoff. At the mention of pernicious herbs, the ill-suppressed fury of the Czar broke out in violence; and, commanding the viands to be brought before him, too truly did he find them to be blended with the fatal herbs.

The whole of this scene had passed before Romanoff as a vision; and he could scarcely believe the evidence of his ears and eyes, so improbable did it appear that his servant, his trusted servant, should give false testimony against him. "Am I mad, or dreaming?" he inwardly repeated; "do I really see and hear—is it really Danilo who seeks my blood, or does some horrid vision deceive me?" Amazement, surprise, confusion, at first bewildered his senses, and kept him silent, as he listened in wonder to the charges; but when the voices of the courtiers broke upon him in exclamations of horror at his supposed crime; when the Czar, too, asserted that his silence confirmed his guilt, he was roused to anger, and loudly demanded to be heard in his defence. This was not refused, and he pleaded his cause with all the force and eloquence of indignant virtue and

injured innocence ; but he pleaded to those who had already prejudged him, to those who had condemned him in their wishes, and whose hearts were closed by a mean rivalry of power, or more abject jealousy of wealth : not one voice was raised in his favour, for even his friends were kept silent by the dread of falling under the impetuous anger of the Czar. The slave of suspicion, mistrust, and impetuous feelings, the Czar was too prompt to judge with haste and act with cruelty ; and now, recollecting the near affinity between the accused and the family whose throne he had usurped, and yielding to the sudden impulse of every thing wrong in his heart, he sternly commanded that Romanoff should be taken to a dungeon, there to await his final sentence. No sooner had he been dragged away from the court, of which he was the highest ornament, to be enclosed in the same prison with thieves and murderers, than orders were given to arrest his brother Fedor, myself, and many of those connected with the family.

Whilst these transactions were taking place at the palace, and Romanoff was being thus sacrificed to treachery, falsehood, suspicion, and envy, Marina and I, little dreaming of the ruin which had fallen upon him, or anticipating the evils which encircled us, were forming plans for future

enjoyment, or discoursing on the happiness we had in possession, with that quiet feeling of calm satisfied pleasure which springs from security and content. Our wishes were gratified, our desires fulfilled; we had little to hope, we believed we had less to fear. Alas! even at the time we thought ourselves most secure in the possession of every blessing, the fatal orders were already given which overwhelmed us with misery and ruin. The servants rushing into our room with terror and dismay, first startled me from this dream of peace; but what words can express the tumult of my passions, when, a moment afterwards, I found myself surrounded by the soldiers of the Czar; when I felt them tearing me from the arms of Marina, who clung convulsively to my side; when I heard her piercing shriek as they dragged me from her, and saw her fall fainting and senseless to the ground? Rage and indignation inflamed me to madness; terror, amazement, distraction, made me frantic. Struggling with the violence of despair, I broke from their grasp, and sprang towards Marina; I knelt beside her, raised her in my arms, and clasped her senseless form in agony to my breast, till the ferocious soldiers, paying no respect to my grief, again tore me from her.

Why I was arrested, and whither I was being

dragged, were alike mysteries to me; for, though treated as a criminal, I was not conscious of any crime. But one part of the mystery was soon cleared up; we soon drew near to the public prison, and the gate of that receptacle of guilt and misery opening at our approach, showed but too evidently the fate which awaited me; told me but too plainly I was doomed to breathe my sighs in a dungeon, where no ear would listen to my complaints, no tongue would soothe my grief. Thus, then, were ended all my fond hopes of lasting pleasure; thus were dispelled the bright illusions which had deceived me with visionary pictures of lasting happiness.

Harrassed and exhausted both in mind and body, I followed my guards in silence towards the dungeon in which I was to be immured; still endeavouring to buoy myself with the hope that the influence of Romanoff would not be exerted in vain to make my innocence apparent, and procure me justice. Gracious Heaven! what then were my feelings when the dungeon door opening discovered to me Romanoff himself, with his brother Fedor, bound in fetters, chained like culprits to the wall! My heart died within me at the dreadful sight, and my knees bent under me as I staggered towards him; I could not speak, but,

seizing his hand, I pressed it to my lips, and bathed it in my tears. Romanoff was not less agitated than myself; it was with difficulty he could command himself sufficiently to give me an account of the treachery which had been practised against him, and of the unjust judgment of the Czar; he was subdued even to tears by the thoughts of the wretchedness our fate would bring upon Marina, of the dangers she would be exposed to in our fall; for, alas! our fall was but too certain, our doom was sealed. Before the evening of that fatal day had closed; before that sun had set which, at its rising, had seen us happy in the possession of every blessing that life can give, Romanoff was doomed to undergo the extremity of human misery; was destined to know that by the hand of the executioner alone he would be freed from his dungeon and his chains.

Bereft of every other hope, he had been endeavouring to cheer his brother Fedor by representing how very unlikely it was that nobles of their rank should be long denied the means of justifying themselves from the false accusation of their enemies; but, whilst he was yet speaking, the dungeon door opened to admit the officer of the guard, who entered without attendants. "It may be called a cruelty in me," said he, presenting to

Romanoff a paper he carried in his hand, "to show you this order; but it would be more cruel were I to hide it from you. I must not comment on it, my duty forbids me; but I may grieve that misfortune has reached the noble-minded Romanoff; and, though I cannot avert his impending fate, I may endeavour to prepare him for it."

Whilst the officer was pronouncing these words, Romanoff hastily read the paper. The first glance showed him it contained an order for his execution on the morrow; and so unexpected, so unjust, so dreadful a termination to the injuries already heaped upon him, was more than even his fortitude could support. He dropped the fatal paper from his hand, and burst into tears. But his grief was for his daughter, not for himself; the idea of leaving her an unprotected orphan in the midst of distress and dangers, abandoned to fall unnoticed in the ruin of her family, was far more dreadful to him than the sight of death; and the thought of being torn from her without one last embrace, one parting blessing, was more galling than his chains. He implored the officer, in terms which no one could have heard unmoved, to lessen the sufferings of his dying hour, by bringing Marina to receive his blessing. The officer was himself a father, and he promised to conduct Marina to the prison,

though at the risk of his own life, as soon as it should be sufficiently dark for him to quit his post unseen. He left us to fulfil this promise, and the remaining hours of daylight were hours of torturing suspense; for we were ignorant of every thing that had befallen Marina, and knew not to what dangers or insults she might have been exposed, whilst our fears pictured the worst, filling us with hideous surmises and frightful thoughts.

Marina, in the meanwhile, had been a prey to grief and terror. She had lain senseless a considerable time after I was dragged away, and the utmost care of her attendants could scarcely revive her; when, however, at length, recovering, she learned that both her father and husband were prisoners, that her whole family was threatened with destruction, a feeling of utter desolation again overcame her, and in agony of soul she prayed for death. But after this first burst of despair, she shuddered at the idea of having invoked death to her relief, and knelt in prayer to Heaven. Nor did she kneel in vain; submission and virtuous constancy were sent to her support, and she was thenceforward enabled to meet her afflictions with a more resigned spirit. In this state of mind the officer, faithful to his promise, discovered her, sitting in a distant chamber of the once splendid

mansion, lonely and in darkness, and abandoned even by those servants who had been born in her father's house. At the approach of danger they had fled; had forsaken their mistress in the hour of peril and affliction. Though all of them had known her bounty, had been the objects of her care in the time of prosperity and pleasure, one only of the whole train now remained: Marpha, her aged nurse, was the only one who adhered to her in sorrow and distress, the only one who had constancy to encounter danger for her sake.

When the officer, having traversed the deserted courts, had entered the spacious hall in quest of some person to direct him to the object of his search, he was perceived by this old servant; who, believing he was come to add to the desolation of the scene, continued to watch him fearfully at a distance. But after he had convinced her of his friendly intentions, and that she might, without fear, conduct him to Marina, she led the way through a long suite of apartments, rendered dreary and ruinous by the hand of pillage. The costly ornaments and splendid furniture that so lately adorned them, were now broken and scattered on the floor; and all was darkness, save where the feeble glimmer of a lamp, which the nurse carried in her hand, gave just light enough

to discover the work of devastation. In the midst of this scene of ruin Marina was sitting lonely, disconsolate, robbed of every hope, of every comfort, but that which sprang from confidence in Heaven. When she beheld, by the faint light of the lamp, the figure of a man approaching, she was startled, and rose to fly; but the voice of her nurse checking this impulse of her fears, she again resumed her seat, and bade him disclose the purport of his visit. This he did in few words; telling her he was a messenger from her father, sent to conduct her to him in prison to receive his blessing. The pleasure these words conveyed, the joy she felt at the idea of again embracing her unhappy father, sank before a quick succeeding fear, which flashed across her mind. "To receive his blessing!" she exclaimed; "Alas! alas! then I know it is his last. Oh! tell me the dreadful truth, do not rack me with suspense, do not torture me with doubts—tell me, may I still hope he will be safe, may I still hope we shall again meet in happiness, or am I doomed to endless wretchedness?" The officer was too much affected to conceal his feelings; the sight of so much loveliness and so much virtue sinking in misery, had touched him to the heart, and her appeal moved him even to tears. His embarrassed air confirmed her fears;

she could not withstand the shock, but, burying her face in the bosom of Marpha, who knelt by her side imploring her to be consoled, she yielded to the full torrent of despair. "Then I am lost, indeed," she cried, in a voice scarcely articulate, "and no hope remains for me on earth; all that this world held of good is torn from me for ever; father, husband, friends, all, all are taken from me, and I am left a wretched, broken-hearted, lonely creature, to sink to the grave in hopeless misery. But Heaven's will be done. Come," she added, recovering a little, "I will not waste the few short moments that remain in lamentations and complaints; come, let me hasten to him to receive his parting blessing, his last embrace." Her tears prevented her from saying more; but she rose, and, wrapping herself in her pelisse, followed the officer, who conducted her, in mournful silence, to the prison.

After a long interval of suspense, of anxious fear, we at last heard them approach: what words can tell the pleasure, what words can tell the charm, her loved accents had power to give even to the gloomy terrors of a dungeon? The door, at length, opened, and she stood before us, lovely, indeed, but oh, how changed! The bright glow of health had forsaken her cheek, the brilliancy of

her eye was gone; she was pale, dejected, care-worn; the misery of a few short hours had marked her frame with the deep ravages of time and sickness.

Though prepared for this awful meeting, the sight of her father in chains and fetters was so appalling, that she had not strength to bear it. Struck motionless with horror, she stood trembling, and was sinking to the earth, when I caught her in my arms and supported her to his bosom. She fell on his neck almost deprived of sense, and could only express the anguish of her soul in tears and convulsive sighs. Romanoff, too, wept; and, in tears far more eloquent than words, mourned over his unhappy child. But when the first shock of meeting under such heart-rending circumstances had somewhat passed, and he was again able to give utterance to his feelings, he poured out his sorrow in words of mournful tenderness. "Oh! my child," he cried, "how can I bear to think of thy sufferings, and not die with grief! To think that in a few short hours thou wilt be left a wretched orphan, homeless, friendless, without hope or comfort; be left to pine in want and misery, to mourn for a little space the memory of thy murdered father, then sink, in poverty and sorrow, to the grave. It breaks my heart." Ma-

rina wept bitterly; yet, striving to command her feelings, she endeavoured to console him. "Do not, my father, mourn so heavily for your daughter, but let her kiss away your tears and soothe your grief; Heaven will support her in her misery, and in Heaven she will find a refuge from her suffering." "In Heaven only will it be," replied Romanoff; "but come, my child, kneel with me whilst I implore its pity for thee even here, and kneel that I may bless thee." They knelt and prayed, and in prayer they found such comfort as the wretched only can appreciate.

Marina continued in the dungeon until morning almost dawned; when the officer, who at her first coming had retired to avoid intruding upon her sorrow, returned with Marpha, whom he intimated he had brought to attend her home. This was a dreadful moment to us all; more dreadful than any thing we had suffered yet. Not to distress her father, or add to his misery, Marina had till then, in some measure, commanded her feelings; but the effort had exhausted her, she could continue it no longer; her mind had been overwrought, and, at this intimation, that she must tear herself away never to see him more, all her firmness forsook her, she became quite distracted. She sprang towards him, and clung to his neck, and twined

herself in his arms. "Oh, my father!" she exclaimed, "let them not tear me from thee, let me stay with thee yet a little longer; oh! do not bid me leave thee; let me yet stay a few short moments; yet once more hear thy parting blessing; once more receive thy last embrace—and then let me die. Merciful God, take pity on me! I cannot bear this dreadful moment; my heart is breaking."

"My child, my child," cried Romanoff, "be comforted; God will take pity on thee, though the world forsake thee. Father of mercies, look with compassion on her sorrows, and give her strength to bear them; bind up her broken heart, be near her in her misery, console her in affliction! Oh, Marina! when I am no more, cherish the memory of your father; think of the love he bore you, and remember his last injunction. Marina, live, I charge you, live for my sake—for Alexei's sake; he will escape this peril and will love and cherish you; and, if it be possible, do not curse my murderers, strive to forgive them. Bless thee, my child, bless thee—take this last parting kiss, the last I can ever give thee—yet once again—and now my severest pang is over."

Marina's voice was suffocated by hysteric sobs; she could not speak, but she fell upon his bosom,

and poured out floods of tears. Whilst yet hanging there in speechless agony, a light was seen gleaming along the passage leading to the dungeon ; and this was quickly succeeded by the distant tread of soldiers. The officer became alarmed and agitated, and earnestly entreated her to retire ; but she heeded not his voice, her ear had caught the fearful sound of approaching steps ; it distracted her with terror, and she clung yet more closely to her father's neck.

In the meantime the torch-light each instant became more glaring, the footsteps more distinctly heard ; and in a few moments the soldiers stood before us. It was a detachment sent to take Romanoff to the place of execution. Marina gazed wildly on them as they entered the dungeon ; her whole frame shook convulsively ; she grasped her father for support ; her breathing grew quick and tremulous ; she uttered a long-drawn cry, and fell senseless in his arms. Romanoff looked on her in agony ; he pressed her to his breast, kissed her pallid cheek, and bathed it with his tears. " Alexei," he cried, " come to me, and take her from my bosom ; I cannot bear to look longer on her sufferings, it quite unmans me." I approached and knelt before him, when, gently laying her in my arms, he continued, " take

her, Alexei, and, if it should please Heaven to rescue you from this danger, cherish her, love her; you are all that will remain to her on earth; let her not sink under adversity and affliction, but soothe her, comfort her, be in kindness a father to her." Then turning to his brother Fedor, who, from the first, had remained absorbed in the profoundest grief, he grasped his hand, tenderly embraced him, and bade him a last farewell. His chains and fetters were by this time nearly struck off, and the soldiers were preparing to lead him from the dungeon; but I could see no more, my senses grew confused, my brain was in a whirl, and I became insensible to every thing around me.

When I awoke from this trance of misery, I found Marina lying on a pallet which the humanity of the officer had provided. Marpha and Fedor Romanoff, then loosened from his fetters, were hanging over her, bathing her temples, and endeavouring to call her back to life. Fearing that the vital spark had flown, I knelt by her side, watching in agony for some sign of returning animation; but I watched long and painfully ere a gentle sigh told me she lived. The only solace my heart could then know leaped to my bosom, and I blessed the good omen that snatched me

from distraction. Presently her opening eye looked sadly on me, then wandered round the dungeon for her father's form, then closed again in anguish. The vain search seemed, by recalling the recollection of the last dreadful hour, to have once more sunk her in insensibility. She long continued silent and motionless; but when at length she again looked up, she faintly pronounced my name, calling me to her in a low feeble voice, and, as my tears fell on her pale cheek, she bade me for her sake be comforted. Oh, Marina! that mournful look, that gentle voice, can never perish from my memory—the recollection of those soft accents, that tearful glance, can never fade; in the hour of misery they saved me from despair, in the time of youthful affliction they gave me hope, and even now, in age and sickness, they still revive in me feelings of melancholy pleasure.

My joy at seeing Marina restored to life was quickly exchanged for deep solicitude and fear, for it was soon perceived that her existence hung only on a breath. The excitement of overstrained feelings and mental anguish had so exhausted her strength and depressed her mind, that she fell almost immediately into a state of low feverish illness. Her life, indeed, was in such imminent danger, that the humane officer of the prison

yielded to my prayer of allowing her to remain with me in the dungeon, at a crisis when each moment might be her last. Marpha also was permitted to be almost constantly with her through the day, and the faithful creature attended her mistress in the horrors of a dungeon, with more anxious kindness than she had done even in the days of wealth and splendour. I watched over Marina many long nights in intense anxiety, fearfully marking every varying symptom, before I could perceive the least favourable change; and many long days were passed in pain and restlessness, before she could be raised from the pallet on which she was extended. But the fever happily at length abating, she felt once more the promise of returning health; with that promise came also greater tranquillity of spirit and peace of mind, for in the thoughts of her sick-bed she had found a source of consolation. The reflection that her miseries could not have been sent as a chastisement of crime, but as a trial of virtue, gave her resignation to yield to them without complaint, whilst, from a feeling of conscious innocence and piety she derived a hope that left her sorrowful, indeed, but not despairing.

CHAPTER XI.

BEFORE Marina had regained her strength, the fate of her uncle was decided. The Czar, satiated, perhaps, with the blood of her father, did not take away Fedor's life also for a supposititious crime, though the punishment inflicted on him was not much less severe than death, as he was cut off from the hope of ever living for his family, by being banished to a monastery in the province of Archangel, and compelled to assume the habit of a monk, under the name of Philaretos : indeed, the name of Romanoff was an object of so much fear to the Czar, as to be dreaded even in exile. And not only was he made to suffer in his own person, but also in that of his wife Axenia, who, being conveyed to a convent on the borders of the lake Onega, was there forced to take the veil. Her dreary abode, however, was rendered bearable by the presence of her only child Michael, a boy scarcely six years old ; who was allowed to accompany his mother in her seclusion, as he was then too young to be an object of suspicion or fear.

Shortly after Fedor Romanoff had been removed from the dungeon, I learnt that I was doomed to suffer exile in Siberia, with several other branches of the Romanoff family. This information was the more afflicting, as it threatened me with a lasting separation from Marina, and the idea of then leaving her was worse even than death itself; all her relatives were condemned to exile or prison, her estates were confiscated, her mansion pillaged, and the name of Romanoff was become dangerous to all who bore it. I could only, therefore, picture her to my mind, surrounded in my absence by poverty and disgrace, and sinking, in wretchedness and sorrow, to the grave. These hideous ideas filled me with fears which I could not suppress; when Marina, by a fresh instance of faithful attachment, endeavoured to dissipate them, and turned my banishment to a source of gratulation.

“Whatever may be your fate, or wherever you may be cast,” she often said, “we will never part; if it is to banishment you are doomed, to banishment we will go together.” I doted on her more than ever for this strong proof of devoted love, and felt that to be torn from her would burst the only tie which held me to existence; nevertheless, the affection I bore her made me wish to dissuade

her from the idea of braving the dangers of Siberia, and the horrors of an exile's life ; but to all my arguments her ready answer was, " Your love is all that remains to me on earth, my only comfort is in your affection ; and, whilst I can possess that perfect and unalloyed, I may be happy even in poverty and exile. If I remain here, I remain to die a wretched outcast, without home or friend ; but, if I am true to the dictates of my heart, and constant to my vows, if I adhere to my husband in his adversity, I shall know that I am not forsaken by all the world ; that there is, at least, one near to comfort, console, cherish, and defend me, whilst in the consciousness that he will approve my constancy, and requite my love, I shall find spirit to contend with many evils, and strength to bear them."

Convinced, in the end, that her constancy was not to be shaken by any argument I could use, I ceased to oppose her ; and, soothed by the reflection that whatever might be my suffering Marina would still be near me, I waited with patient resignation for the hour in which I was to begin the horrid march : whilst Marina, no less consoled by the conviction that sorrow and misfortune only served to bind us more closely to each other, contemplated its terrors without fear.

When, after a few days' anxious expectation, the orders for my removal to join a chain of other exiles were at length issued, Marina, having parted tenderly from her faithful Marpha, prepared to meet the dangers that were before her with alacrity and firmness. Indeed, almost the only pain she appeared to feel in leaving Mosco, a place which had been to her a scene of so many horrors, was the necessity of abandoning her old nurse to end a life of faithful services in want; for Marpha was too old to follow her mistress, and Marina was too destitute to be able to give more than tears and prayers to her aged servant.

When this parting was over, our business with the world seemed to have ended, and we almost wished for the hour which was to take us, perhaps, for ever from it. That hour was not long delayed; the next morning, at break of day, the dungeon was filled with soldiers, who were to form part of the escort for the prisoners: I was led by them into a court, where many other exiles of the family of Romanoff were already collected, and was then locked, with my companions in suffering, to a massive chain.

Whilst we were yet in the court-yard, Marina came from the dungeon, trembling and pale, it is true, with intense anxiety; but not faltering in

constancy, or regretting the resolution she had taken. She had divested herself of her accustomed dress; and now, arrayed in a peasant's coarsest clothes, she came prepared to encounter hardships and privations, appalling even in idea, hoping that each day she might gain greater strength, or that Heaven would support her though her strength should fail. Happily, however, Babaiëff, the humane officer of the prison, who had already done so much towards alleviating our sufferings, came into the yard to witness our departure, as well as to take leave of his brother Nikata, who chanced to be the subaltern appointed to command the detachment which was to guard us. He was struck with the altered appearance of Marina; for, not having been previously made acquainted with her design, he wondered wherefore she had assumed the dress of a class so inferior to her own: but when she told him her intention, he was filled with pity and admiration; pity that one so good, so gentle, should have fallen into such misery, and admiration of the virtue which so firmly supported her under it. Though he foresaw all the danger of her undertaking, he would not dissuade her from it, but rather encouraged her by the promise of his brother Nikata's protection. To the destitute and wretched a very

trifle can convey a ray of hope or pleasure; and so very destitute were we, that the good disposition of a subaltern officer of little power could be a source of happiness to us both, and the advantage he gave Marina of riding in the peasant's cart attending him, an object of great importance to her comfort.

We were grateful for this humble piece of good fortune, and hailed it as a happy omen; nor were we disappointed in our hopes that it might augur good, for by means of it Marina accomplished the journey with far less pain than we had feared; instead of being exhausted and worn out by the labour of toiling daily after us on foot over barren steppes and trackless deserts, she each day seemed to gather increased strength from the more moderate fatigue she thus endured. And the young subaltern, too, faithful to the promise made his brother, did all that was in his power to lessen the hardships of her journey; and, by his attentive care, warded off so many difficulties, and so materially diminished her anticipated sufferings, that she bore them not only with constancy, but almost, with ease.

Nor was he less humane in his conduct towards his prisoners: it was a subject of such public notoriety, that the family of Romanoff had been

sacrificed to treachery and suspicion, that Nikata, regarding them more as objects of commiseration than reproach, could not bear the idea of treating them as criminals, and resolved to obey the generous impulse of his feelings, even though it might be attended with some risk to himself. Accordingly, having exacted from each a promise, that should he free them from the galling weight of their chain, from the necessity of walking in close contact with murderers and robbers, they would not attempt to escape, but would keep strictly with the guard, he removed their fetters. I love to dwell on the merits of this generous youth; for, not only did he give me comparative ease during that dreadful journey, by freeing me from the galling load of chains and fetters, but I feel that I was also indebted to him for the life of Marina; that but for his humanity, in using the power his command gave him to guard her from many of the hardships of the road, she must have sunk under them.

After many weeks of incessant fatigue and great privation, we at length toiled our way to Tobolsk, the residence of the governor of Siberia; and there we were destined to suffer yet one pain more, by being again exposed to the sting of baseness and ingratitude. Uglitz, the governor, had

been raised to his present rank by the interest of Romanoff, and was, besides, indebted to him for many other acts of friendly service; so that we thought we might reckon with confidence upon being treated by him with as much consideration and lenity as the nature of his command would permit. But, in reckoning upon his gratitude, we did so in perfect ignorance of the man; we thought him noble, generous, but he proved himself sordid, ambitious, cruel. Romanoff was no more; the fortunes of his family were fallen. It had no longer any power to serve, it had no longer any favour to bestow; but Clechnin was now the rising favourite of the Czar; the murderer of Romanoff was now the minion of fortune, and to Clechnin every sacrifice must be made, though at the price of honour, gratitude, and every noble or manly feeling. Thus thought Uglitz; and, to secure the favour of Clechnin, he treated all the relatives of Romanoff with the greatest rigour. He scattered them through the most desolate and inhospitable districts, where they were totally cut off from all intercourse with each other; thus taking from them the only hope of consolation left them in their banishment.

The spot in which I was condemned to drag out my days of exile, was near a lake in the Bara-

binski steppe; and to that inhospitable country Marina followed me with the same patient resignation, the same calm endurance, which had hitherto supported her; not, however, with the same ease, for we had no longer the attentive and obliging Nikata to guard us, but were now driven along by a band of Tartars; barbarians who spoke a language unintelligible to us, and treated us with less consideration than the beasts they rode. Day after day we toiled wearily along before these wild Tartars; who, when we were sinking with fatigue, not unfrequently goaded us with their spears, to quicken our steps. On all that long and dreary road we had little food besides the black bread we carried with us; seldom any covering from the inclement sky besides the sheep-skin cloaks we wore, or any resting-place but the bare earth, excepting when sometimes we met a party of wandering Ostiaks, and were sheltered for a night in their Kébitkas,* and feasted with their dried fish and mare's milk; or when, more rarely, we passed an encampment of the same tribe of Tartars, and our guards chose to regale themselves on their coarse hospitality for a longer period.

* A kind of covered waggon, which forms the only habitation of the Nomade Tartars.

How Marina, bred up in luxury and comfort, delicate in frame, and unused to all violent exertion, could have lived through such severe privation, such extreme fatigue, has always been a source of wonder to me, and a subject of grateful admiration. In all this long course of suffering no complaint escaped her; but, even at the worst, when lying on the bare earth, faint with hunger and fatigue, even then she has tried to cheer me with a smile, whilst supporting her drooping head upon my bosom. But, though by constancy and resignation, a firm support was given to her mind in this struggle with adversity, the powers of her body were quickly failing, and, when at last we reached the desolate abode in which we were to hide our wretchedness, she was almost worn to death; all her strength was gone, and she was so exhausted that I feared neither rest nor care would be able to restore her. Indeed, it was almost in rest alone that I had to trust; for though now arrived at a place of shelter, we were still destitute of every thing, even of the common necessities of life. But the relief of being freed from the cruel treatment of our barbarian guards, the feeling that the miseries of the journey were over, that we had at last reached our destination

where we should be left alone, made us look almost with cheerfulness even on this wretched dwelling allotted us.

It was a miserable cabin, built of mud and rushes, close on the borders of a lake. The interminable plain spreading around it, covered many months in the year with drifting snow, and many months scorched by a burning sun, that destroyed every sign of vegetation, was at once barren and arid. It was one vast lifeless desert, where all was still and noiseless, excepting when the dreary silence was broken by the raging of a storm, mingled with the rushing waters of the lake as, driven by the wind, they rolled over the flat sandy beach; and the howling of wolves, or other animals of prey, roused by the tempest to join in the horrid discord. Nothing that bore life was to be seen, excepting occasional flights of birds, or some of the prowling beasts of the desert. The cabin itself was not less desolate than its situation. It was formed of two small rooms, and the perishable materials of which it was built, having in many places given way, freely admitted the wind and rain; a little inclosure surrounded it, which appeared to have been once a garden, though now destroyed; and, to complete the misery and desolation of the scene, the unhappy exile who had

raised this abode of wretchedness, and terminated his miserable existence in it, was laid in a shallow grave before the door.

Wretched as was this dwelling, it yet contained a few objects which comforted us a little, and kept despair at bay. In the outer room were one or two vessels of clay and a wooden bench ; a hatchet and a small iron cauldron were lying near the stove ; and, what was still more valuable, the fishing nets formerly belonging to our unhappy predecessor, were hanging from the roof ; whilst in the inner room was a couch of the roughest make, with a mattress of rushes, and near it a small table, on which was lying an open book of devotion. On the first page of this book there was written a memento of the fate that threatened us, in a short record of the miseries which had pressed him to the grave. We contemplated the exile's grave, and read the memorial of his sufferings, with feelings of great despondency ; then sitting on the couch on which he had, perhaps, breathed his last, we indulged in painful thoughts. We believed our woes must quickly end as his had done ; that we should soon like him be tenants of an obscure grave ; or, perhaps, more unhappy still, be left even without a covering of earth when life had flown.

But these reflections could not be long inactively pursued ; Marina was faint and exhausted, requiring food and rest, whilst the hope of supplying her wants was a strong incitement to exertion. I endeavoured, therefore, to shake off my heavy despondency ; and, taking down the hooks and fishing nets, which I then regarded as a precious treasure, I entreated Marina to compose herself to rest, whilst I should be absent seeking food. Totally unskilled in the art of fishing, I had seized the nets with a kind of desperation, as a drowning man struggling for life would seize a straw ; and I went forth almost hopeless of succeeding in my attempt. Unskilled, however, as I was, my awkward efforts were in the end crowned with success ; I took an abundant supply, and the prospect of finding in the lake a never-failing means of support, gave me spirits to return with cheerfulness to Marina. I found her still sleeping, and she continued in a deep unbroken sleep several hours longer, after my return ; when she awoke so much refreshed as to be able to partake with enjoyment of the simple meal I had in the mean time prepared.

This was certainly one of the happiest meals I have ever made. Only a few moments prior to it, I was possessed with the dread of famine, with

the fear that Marina would sink for want of such sustenance as her extreme weakness required; but I now saw before me the first fruits of an abundant harvest, and the brightening looks of Marina cheered me with the promise that her strength would be soon restored. Nor were my hopes deceived; each day she regained something of her former health, and each night's rest wore away some traces of the sufferings she had undergone. In the mean time the easy labour of providing for our wants from the produce of the lake, was a source of amusement to me; whilst Marina found occupation in giving to the cabin an air of comfort, which at first we thought it incapable of wearing. In these cares and employments the days passed away without tediousness or fatigue; and in the evenings we met each other with renewed delight, after the short absence of the morning. Thus even in a desert, and in exile, we were able to find comforts, amusements, and resources; whilst happy in each other, we soon almost ceased to regret the world, or to wish for its "splendid misery." We were thankful for the good remaining to us, and submitted to the evils of our lot with patient hope and resignation.

With the different seasons our occupations were somewhat varied; in summer we employed our-

selves in providing a store of dried food and fuel for the winter, but in winter we were busied in making traps to catch the animals, whose fur supplied us with clothing; in the summer also we found a yet more pleasing occupation in cultivating the little garden which was near the cabin. When we first saw it, we believed it to be quite destroyed, and its ruin was a source of great regret; but, as the spring advanced, many seeds which had lain in the earth concealed through the winter, sprang up and furnished us with an abundant supply of gourds and water-melons. This was, indeed, a blessing; it at once relieved a want from which we had greatly suffered, and removed our fear of again enduring a similar privation.

Sometimes, though very rarely, our solitude was interrupted by small bodies of Tartars, who were in the habit of fishing upon the lake. One of these parties came to the neighbourhood for that purpose not many weeks after our arrival there; and seeing the cabin occupied they approached it, perhaps for the sake of our hospitality, or probably merely from curiosity. But whatever may have been the motive of their visit, it procured us both pleasure and comfort; for amongst them was a Tartar, whose good will our unhappy predecessor had conciliated, and who appeared not unwilling

to transfer his friendship to us. He spoke a little broken Russian, and it was not therefore difficult, through that medium, to engage him to serve us also to the best of his abilities. After this chance visit with his companions, he sometimes returned alone, and occasionally remained with us several days together; for our parts we always gladly welcomed him, the more especially as he generally brought with him small presents of corn or bread. By his instruction I became a skilful hunter, and no less dexterous fisherman; and learnt not only how to make snares, nets, and other implements of the chase, but also how to prepare the furs, and preserve food for winter stores. When he first brought us the corn, we had, during some weeks, been without bread; I treasured it, therefore, with the greatest care, until the proper season for sowing it had arrived; and as it began to show its green blades shooting out of the earth, I watched its growth almost as anxiously as a parent would watch the growth of a favourite child. My care was richly rewarded in a fruitful harvest. From that time our comfort was increased by the possession, not only of the bare necessities of life, but also an abundance of those first of luxuries, corn and bread.

Thus, month after month, and year after year

rolled on, but the progress of months and years brought with it no change in our condition; we were, however, contented, and did not much wish for change. Time had reconciled us to our lot, our wants had become more and more limited from day to day, or we every day learned to accommodate ourselves to them with greater ease. Ten years had passed over our heads since we were first driven into exile, and in ten years of exile and solitude we had almost forgotten the world we had long ceased to think of it as a desirable object, and all wish to return to it had long since died away. But time, whilst it had been thus teaching us to bear cheerfully the hardships of a life of exile, had, in its course, been working changes in the condition of our country, which once more called us back again into the world, once more surrounded us with its splendour and its cares.

CHAPTER XII.

AFTER the death of the Czar Boris, Russia was torn by a long reign of anarchy, and a succession of revolutions, more sanguinary and more violent than have occurred at almost any other period, or in any other country. Fedor, the son of Boris, was assassinated by command of the first impostor, Demetrius, who in his turn was murdered in an insurrection raised by Chouiski, to place himself on the throne ; he again was quickly dethroned and compelled to become a monk, by the second Demetrius, supported by Sigismond, king of Poland ; and this Demetrius was stabbed by Ouronsoff, a Tartar prince. Then sprang up the third Demetrius, a monk ; and a reign of anarchy succeeded, in which Russia fell under the yoke of the Poles, and continued so until delivered by the patriot Pojarski.

After that event the Estates were assembled at Moscow, in order to elect a sovereign who, they hoped, would bury the memory of their past sufferings in the peace and moderation of his government. These Estates were composed of the Boyars

and other officers of the court, the Voyevards, the Boyars of the cities, deputies from the cities, merchants, and proprietors of land. The debates of this national assembly were at first violent and tumultuous ; but, as soon as it was restored to order and reason, it proceeded to elect Michael, the son of Fedor Romanoff, to fill the vacant throne. So extraordinary are the revolutions of fortune, the changes and chances of the world ! This youth had remained nearly ten years with his mother Axenia, in the sequestered melancholy retreat, on the border of the lake Onega, to which she had been banished ; but, at the expiration of that period, he was, at the age of sixteen, taken from the hut in which he had passed a childhood of exile and poverty, to be invested with the ensigns of royalty, and placed upon the throne of a powerful nation ; whilst his father, rising superior to every effort to depress him, and to every attempt to sink him in obscurity, rendered the name of Philaretos illustrious by the wisdom of his councils and firmness of his conduct, which, under the government of his son, restored the greatness of his country, after it had been almost destroyed by the hand of anarchy and oppression.

One of the first acts in the reign of Michael Fedorovich, was the recall of the different branches

of his family from exile. No sooner had the new Czar ascended the throne, than he issued a command for all the Romanoffs to be reinstated in the possession of their estates and honours; at the same time despatching an officer of distinction to Siberia, to announce this change in their fortunes, and accompany them on their return.

The first intimation that Marina and I had of these events, was from a courier, who preceded that officer from Tobolsk. I shall never forget the hour when the courier arrived, or the feelings with which his intelligence thronged my breast. It was on a tempestuous evening, late in autumn. The day had been lowering and stormy, and I had returned, weary and spiritless, to the cottage, after having been several hours tossed about in great peril on the lake. Marina was lying on her bed of rushes, suffering under the attack of an illness which had for some days oppressed her, whilst I sat dejected at her side, thinking, in deep sorrow, of the hopeless misery to which I should be left were Marina to be taken from me. I had long remained silent, and, as that picture of lonely wretchedness passed before my eyes, tears stole down my cheek. But though they were shed in silence, they were not unobserved; Marina saw them, and, guessing their source, by every gentle

art endeavoured to turn the current of my thoughts. But my spirits were too depressed to be raised to sudden cheerfulness ; I had yielded myself wholly up to gloomy anticipations ; and, notwithstanding her persuasive entreaties, I still sat cheerless and disconsolate, brooding over the misery which seemed to threaten me. On a sudden, my reverie was broken by the sound of wheels distinctly heard through the storm. So unusual a sound amazed and startled me, for it was one which I had not before heard since I had been an inhabitant of the desert ; and I sprang to the cottage door to discover whence it could proceed. Scarcely, however, had I passed the threshold, when a pavoska stopped before it ; and a courier, descending, placed in my hand a letter, announcing the election of Michael Fedorovich to the throne. Words would but feebly express the feelings which this intelligence excited in us ; wonder, admiration, gratitude, at once thronged our breasts, and filled us with emotions to which we had long been strangers. But happier far to me than the recall to liberty and honour was the influence I perceived it had upon Marina ; whilst perusing it, I could see the glow of returning health spread over her face, and chase away that pallid air of sickness which had so lately filled me with alarm and grief. The

promise it contained of unlooked-for happiness was as a medicine to her soul, which quickly revived her drooping strength, and raised her from the bed of pain and sickness.

The officer who had been charged to convey us back to Mosco, arrived at our cottage a few hours later than the courier, and brought with him every thing necessary for our comfort on that long and dreary journey: but even with these advantages it was not without a sensation, amounting almost to dread, that Marina contemplated the idea of repassing those deserts in which her former sufferings had been so great. She did not, however, express her fears, but prepared cheerfully for the undertaking. In a few days her health was sufficiently restored to commence it without hazard; and we left, almost with regret, the cottage in which we had passed ten years of exile, but of peace. We knew not by what new trials we might be proved on our return into the world; and at the moment of quitting the lowly shed in which for ten long years we had lived only for each other, in which we had found uninterrupted security and content, we contemplated, with little pleasure, the splendour to which we were returning, for we saw it surrounded by danger and suffering, by envy and oppression. We could not

forget the miseries it had formerly occasioned us ; nor could we, at that moment, help contrasting them with the peace and safety we had found in poverty and exile.

The care that had been taken to provide every thing which could contribute to our comfort, rendered the journey across the desert far less fatiguing than the recollection of former days had taught us to expect, and we arrived at Tobolsk without any material inconvenience. There we met those of our exiled relatives, whom time and misery had yet left alive ; and with far other feelings did we embrace them than when last we parted—the tears we now shed were tears of gratitude and pleasure.

We did not remain longer at Tobolsk than was absolutely necessary to make arrangements for the journey to Mosco ; and, as soon as they were completed, we bent our course with joyous hearts towards the home of our fathers. As we drew nearer to the spot on which our hopes rested, each day procured us some new pleasure ; our journey was a kind of triumph ; the governors of the towns and districts through which we passed, receiving us with the distinction due to the relatives of the Czar, and the peasants of the villages where we

rested, welcoming us with fêtes and songs in praise of the Romanoffs.

When we had arrived within a few versts of Mosco, we resumed the dresses we had worn in exile, and proceeded on foot to meet the other branches of the Romanoff family, who, with their friends, came from the city in procession to receive us. Wrapped in cloaks made from the skins of animals, and wearing on our feet sandals of the same materials, fastened with thongs of leather, we walked bare-headed towards our relatives, whom we saw advancing, with Philaretes in their front. Our meeting was truly affecting; so much so, that even the multitude, drawn thither by curiosity, broke out in expressions of sympathy and feeling. The good deeds of the family were recollected, and repeated from mouth to mouth; whilst many of those who had been relieved by Marina, in the time of famine and distress, now came to her, and, throwing themselves on the ground before her, kissed her feet. She was quite overcome by these marks of public gratitude; nor was she less affected by the meeting with her uncle; for his voice and manner were so like her father's, that they recalled, with agonizing force, the recollection of all the dreadful circumstances

which attended their separation. Falling upon his neck, she wept aloud ; and there was scarcely an eye that witnessed her sorrow but was moistened with a tear.

After these mutual greetings of the exiles with their friends, Philaretos conducted the whole party to Mosco, and presented them, in presence of an assembly of the nobles, to the Czar. So recently himself an exile, the Czar could not restrain his feelings at beholding his relatives kneeling before his throne in the dresses they had worn in banishment, and laying at his feet the chain to which they had formerly been bound. He spoke to them in terms which showed how severely he was inclined to punish those who, by falsehood and perjury, had effected their ruin ; and at the same time repeated his commands for a full restitution to be made of all their honours and possessions. These commands were speedily obeyed ; those who had participated in the plunder of the Romanoffs now hastening to restore every thing they had taken, that by so ready a compliance they might endeavour to turn from themselves the suspicion of having contributed to our fall, and escape the threatened vengeance of the Czar. Thus, then, after many long years of suffering, and many severe afflictions, our sorrows, at last, were ended.

No longer the outcasts of fortune, and the victims of tyranny and injustice, we were restored to the honour and estimation of the world; our trials, to all appearance, were over, and we might now cherish the hope of lasting peace and comfort. We had passed through the vale of adversity with constancy and resignation; and, in the bright prospect of happiness now before us, we saw the recompense of the submissive patience with which we had borne the pressure of undeserved misery.

In the poverty and privation to which we had been so long accustomed, Marina and I had learnt to limit our wants to the bare necessities of life; to set a bound to all our desires; so that the splendour to which we were restored would scarcely have been an object of any great pleasure, had it not afforded us the means of giving comfort to the distressed, as well as of marking our gratitude to those who had been kind or constant to us in adversity and danger. For the greater part of those persons who had courted us in the days of our prosperity, we could have no regard, since they had all forsaken us in the hour of affliction; but there was one who had been faithful to us to the last; and another who, though a stranger, had braved disgrace and punishment to serve us. These two, however, seemed to have forgotten

that we had it now in our power to pay the debt of gratitude we owed them ; for we in vain looked for Marpha and Babaieff among the crowd which now daily flocked round us, courting our favour : to requite their good deeds, we were compelled to seek them in the retreats of poverty. After many fruitless inquiries we at length heard of Babaieff, whose humanity to us whilst in prison had, perhaps, saved Marina's life. He had been dismissed from his employment, and was living in great obscurity : but poor Marpha was even more wretched ; consumed by age and want, we found her in a miserable hovel, breathing her last upon a bed of straw. It was by the merest accident we discovered her situation, or even learnt that she was still in existence. As soon as we were apprized of it, Marina hastened with me to endeavour to rescue her last moments from the grasp of misery, and smooth her passage to the grave. Nothing could be more destitute than the condition of that faithful creature ; there had been none to pity or relieve the wretchedness of a forlorn old woman, and she had pined away existence in abject misery. We found her lying on a bed of straw, destitute even of the common necessities of life. It was a distressing sight to Marina to behold the sufferings of one who had watched over her infancy, and

been faithful in attachment to her through life. She embraced her old nurse with the affection of a daughter, but Marpha at first appeared scarcely conscious of Marina's kindness; her glassy eye wandered for a time in vacancy over her mistress' face, though at last it rested on the well-known features, and, for an instant, was again brightened with the light of life. The recognition gave a momentary pleasure to her dying thoughts; and, clasping Marina in her feeble emaciated arms, she exclaimed, with trembling lips and failing voice, "Oh! my dear, dear lady! I have long been praying to see this hour—thank Heaven, it is come at last: I have lived to behold you once again, and now I shall die in peace." Her words were prophetic of her end; in a few hours more she sank out of life.

Soon after I had returned from exile, I began to prepare for a journey to Poland, that I might justify, before Sigismond, the king, the accusation I had formerly made against Smirnoi, and establish my claims to the name and honours he had usurped. My mother had died whilst I was in banishment; but, though unhappily deprived of her testimony, I still possessed such strong proofs of Smirnoi's crime, that there could be no doubt of my being able to prevail against both his false-

hood and intrigues ; and, supported by the influence of the Czar, I undertook the journey, with the full confidence of success. Nor was I disappointed ; the art and subtlety of Smirnoi failed against the plain evidence of truth ; his guilt was so clearly proved, that the whole body of nobles united with Sigismond to drive him from the government he had usurped, and expel him the kingdom. Finding it hopeless, with the slender forces of a single province, to oppose the united strength of the whole kingdom, he sought in flight to save himself from the punishment awarded him ; whilst I was immediately afterwards carried in triumph through my native Palatinate, and established in the hereditary possessions and government of my ancestors. Full of the hope that I might follow the example of my father, whose mild virtues and easy rule were remembered with regret, the inferior classes of the community loudly expressed their pleasure at my being restored to the exercise of my hereditary rights ; whilst the nobles of the Palatinate, rejoicing in the fall of one who had endeavoured to infringe upon their privileges, hastened to me, surrounded by their vassals, to testify their approbation at my advancement to the government.

I endeavoured not to disappoint the hopes of

either class, and so happily succeeded that all men were pleased and satisfied; the poor called me their protector, their father, whilst the great cited me as their friend and advocate. Marina was not less fortunate in securing esteem and praise; for the men all honoured her, and the women loved her. If she went abroad, the poor followed her with blessings; but if she remained at home, the nobles, with their wives and daughters, assembled round her to admire or imitate. Her gentle manners, her urbanity, benevolence, piety, excited such universal love and admiration, that she was ever attended by a crowd of the nobility, who took pride in paying her distinction; and the little court of the Palatinate of Sandomir was rendered, in honour of her, more brilliant even than that of Poland. Formed to transcend in every station, whether in the exile's cottage or the prince's court, her virtues shone with a brightness which won all hearts to love her and all tongues to speak her praise. If perfect happiness can be found on earth, it then was ours; for we loved each other with an affection which "grew with our growth, and strengthened with our strength," and were surrounded by every thing that can render life delightful; whilst the recollection of the sufferings we had endured, added, perhaps, to the enjoyment of the pleasures

we possessed. But these hours of happiness were soon to cease; they were soon to close in sorrow: death soon stole Marina from me, and buried all my hopes in deep, in dreary misery. Oh! Marina, Marina! how shall I speak of that dreadful moment when, hanging over thee in agony, I saw the chilly hand of death press thee to the grave;—when I caught thy last parting accent, thy last dying look, as faintly thou bowedst thy head upon my breast, and resignedst thy soul to Heaven? Speechless, immoveable, I held thy lifeless body in my arms, and gazed on thy pallid face in anguish too severe for utterance, till sense forsook me, and I sank, fainting, on thy bed of death. Oh, that I had never risen thence! that I had never again opened my eyes upon this life of misery, but had gone with thee to the grave! But now thou art gone, and I am left with a sinking, broken spirit, to mourn thy loss.

When sense returned to me, rejecting the wish of my attendants to remove me from a sight of so much woe, I knelt by the pale corse of her I loved so well, and abandoned myself to tears till I could weep no more; then, hanging over her in silent anguish, I watched incessantly by her side till she was laid on the funereal bier, and was borne from my sight for ever. I tried to follow her to

the grave; but in the vain effort I fell senseless to the earth. My attendants raised me from the ground and bore me to my couch, where I long remained in a state of insensibility; from this I recovered only to sink into a dreary melancholy, a deep dejection, which rendered me unfit for all the business of life, or any intercourse with the world. Immuring myself in solitude, I gave free indulgence to my despondent feelings; and, incapable of listening to the voice of consolation, or of receiving comfort, I abandoned myself to the mournful reveries of a troubled mind. Nor were these always void of a kind of melancholy pleasure; for often, when sitting in silent dejection, brooding over my grief, I have wandered back in thought to former days, and dwelt upon the occurrences of happier hours, until I have almost fancied they were really present. And whilst the form of Marina has risen before my sight, wrapped in the dress of furs she wore in exile, I have again fancied myself with her in the cottage, again heard the storm blow and the waters of the lake roar, when her sweet smile and gentle voice have again taught me to rejoice in the humble roof that sheltered us. Or, sometimes, in a waking dream, I have been again fishing with her on the lake, or sometimes cultivating our little garden, whilst the

bright sun of summer has given an air of cheerfulness even to the deserts that surrounded us; and then memory has again busily retraced our mutual thankfulness and mutual pleasure. Or, turning to other scenes, fancy has again shown her to me moving in the splendour of her court, the admiration, the delight of every heart; and then I have again heard the great repeat her praises, again seen the poor pursue her steps with blessings; but, wandering farther onwards, the scene has changed to one of darkest misery, and shown her to me stretched on the bed of sickness, in the midst of weeping friends; and then I have again seen the cold damp shade of death steal over her pallid cheek, again caught from her quivering lips her last faint sigh, again wept over her in bitter anguish.

Weeks and months passed away whilst I continued in that state of mind: it became, at length, a settled habit, of which I had no resolution even to attempt to divest myself; for the sight of every thing connected with the world grew irksome to me, and whatever could disturb my reveries, or break in upon my day dreams, became more and more displeasing. To indulge in them without restraint I immured myself in deep seclusion, re-

fusing all intercourse with society ; but, whilst I was thus cherishing my grief in solitude, an opportunity was afforded to my enemies of forming intrigues against me, which, depressed as my mind then was, had the effect of sinking it still deeper in melancholy, and of giving it a still greater aver-
for the world.

Whilst I was weeping in secret over my sorrows, Smirnoi was actively exerting all his powers of intrigue, and every deceitful art, to endeavour to render my fidelity to the crown of Poland suspected. His wealth gave him the means of employing such agents as are to be found in every court ; men who, though holding rank in society, are not incorruptible ; and through them he contrived to instil into the mind of the king a suspicion that I was planning to betray his interests, and deliver the Palatinate of Sandomir to the Czar of Russia. My near relationship to the Czar gave a semblance of probability to their insinuations, which the jealousy of Sigismond was but too much inclined to credit. The king, however, was too just not to afford me an opportunity of refuting these calumnies ; and he called upon me to vindicate myself from the insidious charges made against me ; though he, at the same time,

took secret measures to prevent the effect of any treacherous intentions against his power, if such intentions had been entertained.

It was not difficult to repel every suspicion, and make the falsehood of my accusers recoil upon themselves : they shrank from openly maintaining what they had dared secretly to insinuate ; and, so far from permanently weakening the confidence of the king in my fidelity to his crown, the examination instituted in consequence of their suggestions served only to strengthen me in his favour, and to establish me more firmly in his friendship. But though I thus gained increased favour, and a brighter fame, I acquired also a greater disrelish for the world. The exertion I had been called upon to make for my justification had roused me from my reveries, had disturbed the irregular action of my mind, and had given me, for a moment, a degree of energy to which I had long been a stranger. But when the immediate necessity for exertion had ceased, I again fell back into my accustomed melancholy, again indulged my thoughts in solitude, though they now took a new direction ; They now frequently recurred to the days of my childhood, when, with the good monks in the monastery of Tchudoff, my life flowed peacefully in a smooth unruffled current ; and each time the me-

mory of those tranquil hours returned, it left a deeper impression of regret upon my mind. I recollected the modest lives of those devout men, how peacefully, how quietly their days seemed to glide along; whilst in the exercise of their pious duties they appeared to find a resource in every evil, and a consolation in every sorrow. When I contrasted all this with the restlessness and disquietude to which I was exposed, the treachery and falsehood by which I was surrounded; when I thought of the vicissitudes by which my course had been chequered, and of the sufferings and dangers I had encountered, I longed to shelter the remnant of my days in the calm security of such a religious seclusion. I felt how perfectly unequal I should be again to struggle with misfortune, how powerless to repel adversity; and I often asked myself why I continued to encumber a situation which had lost every charm for me—why I continued to live in a world, the heartlessness of whose friendships I had felt, the worthlessness of whose pleasures I had experienced, whose treachery had betrayed me, whose injustice had oppressed me.

The result of these silent inquiries was a determination to leave a world, of which I was growing more and more weary, and to hide my sorrows in the monastery of Petcherski, then fa-

mous throughout all Poland for the sanctity and holy lives of the devout men who dwelt there. But before I executed this resolution I resigned the government of the Palatinate into the hands of the king, and distributed my patrimony in alms and charitable endowments. My business with the world was then ended ; a solitary being, widowed and childless, there was not a single tie to bind me longer to it, and I left it without one feeling of regret.

I have now been many years wearing the habit of a monk, and practising the severities of a monastic life: but never have I regretted the joyless splendour I abandoned ; for in the duties of religion I have found a support which has strengthened me to bear my sorrows with resignation—a comfort which has given peace, and hope, and consolation to my latter days.

Shortly after I had completed the translation of this manuscript, I took leave of my kind host the Archimandrite, in order to continue my journey towards a home whence I had been so long absent. There I, at length, arrived, weary of the life of a wanderer, and panting to repose my cares

in the bosom of a peaceful family. But, alas! I arrived to sorrow and disappointment; deceitful hopes soon embittered my joyless hours, and mocked me with a distant view of happiness that tempted a vain pursuit. Harassed by painful thoughts, by anxious cares, I fled to occupation for relief; when, in throwing together some of the recollections of former days, I endeavoured to deceive the languor of the passing hour. And now, gentle reader, having so far made you my confidant, I bid you adieu! not, however, without the hope that I may have beguiled you also of some weary moments, or even stolen from your sympathy a tear.

THE END.

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